







HOW TO WRITE A BUSINESS LETTER

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PREFACE

Writing letters, very often letters with important consequences, is a responsibility that no one in business escapes, whether he enjoys it or not. Good letters have much to do with building success. Clumsy or tactless letters are almost sure to cause trouble. This book seeks to explain, in terms that will be clear even to those who have heretofore given no special attention to the subject, the points that need to be borne in mind when writing business letters, and to aid the letter-writer in finding the right solution for his individual problems.

Some of the difficulties people run into come from uncertainty about matters of external form. We are often in doubt as to what sort of stationery to use, how to place the letter on the page, how to punctuate, and how to spell. Other questions arise as to how to improve the construction of sentences and paragraphs and still others concern style and tone of address. All these points of custom are important if one's letters are to have that quality of good form that characterizes the correspondence of the best business houses. In the early chapters of this book, accordingly, effort has been made to set down the standards of good letter form fully and clearly, with ample illustration.

Letters are good, however, only if they are effective. The letter is expected to do the work of a face-to-face interview. It is also a record, a potential contract. Therefore, it must be accurate and clear, yet without insulting the reader's intelligence. It must be considerate; yet it must at all times be cautious.

To achieve the necessary command of letter resources, the letter-writer should learn to conquer his moods, writing not according to his feelings at the moment, but rather according

to carefully considered policies. In the later chapters of this book, attention is given to outlining and illustrating the policies employed by successful concerns in building good will by means of letters.

The courtesy of leading business houses has made it possible to illustrate the discussion at every point with suitable letters, taken from recent files. For this kindness grateful acknowledgment is here made. Special acknowledgment is due, for encouragement and counsel throughout the preparation of the volume, to Dean Everett W. Lord, and to Assistant Dean Roy Davis of the College of Business Administration, Boston University.

MARION G. FOTTLER

Boston, Massachusetts, September 16, 1929

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CHAPTER I

HOW LETTERS SERVE BUSINESS

What's in the Mail?—Learning from the Other Fellow. Modern business leans upon letters at every step. How a firm's letters are written has a very great deal to do with its success in selling goods and service, handling inquiries and orders, arranging credit terms, collecting money—not to speak of many so-called "routine" activities. Since skill in this matter comes very largely through noticing how the other fellow does it, any of us can learn much through systematic study of such letters as come to us day by day in the mail. To illustrate some of the points it is profitable to notice, here are a few examples gathered in one office. They certainly throw light upon the question: How can letters help business fulfil its aim?

Some Hotel Letters. Perhaps the first use we think of for letters is selling goods, or service. A certain Nebraska hotel man ¹ "sells" his hotels to men and women who are planning to attend conventions in his cities, by writing them clever letters expressed in the technical language of each group. It is his policy to make every one of the patrons at his hotels feel at home. His letters speak for him in a language which has an especial appeal.

Here are the first two paragraphs of a letter to the Nebraska Cleaners and Dyers Association:

Prepare for a clean, good time at the Nebraska Cleaners and Dyers Association convention, Omaha, Jan. 26 and 27. Hotel Rome is headquarters and we're as pleased about it now as you'll be while here, and afterward.

¹ Mr. H. C. Greel.

The next thing is to reserve your room. There are 250 in the batch, each spic and span as if just from the dry room after a naphtha cleaning, vacuum shampoo and spotting with a puff iron. No bronze streaks or swale anywhere. Rates?

The Live Stock Men's letter gives a bit of "local color." Below are the first and third paragraphs:

As well-bred livestock is better than scrubs, the Rome is 'way yonder ahead of ordinary hotels.

Stopping at the Rome after putting up in ordinary hotels is like driving a herd from a burned up country into a land of lakes and deep, cool creeks; or like having great stacks of alfalfa hay stored up against the blizzard. The sort of change that makes steers walk up to you and ask, "How come we didn't get this long ago?" After you've been at the Rome one day you'll ask yourself the same question.

This is the way the writer starts off to bankers:

We will honor your draft for a room reservation whenever you come to Omaha. . . .

The third paragraph of a letter to draw business during an automobile show, reads:

Balloon mattresses with non-skid tread are a feature that will appeal to you. Built-in shock absorbers on bed-springs—if you toss in your sleep. But you won't toss. The approved plan for slumber at Hotel Carpenter is to start in low, shift into high 10 minutes later, shut off the gas in half an hour, coast until morning and wake about 7 a.m. in neutral.

When sound business sense and the reader's point of view are backed up by cleverness of expression, you may get letters that are really worth while.

Mere Cleverness Not Wise. But it is easy to go too far in the effort to be clever. Take a simple thing to sell—writing paper—the kind that comes with one's name and address printed at the top of the page. It is almost foolish to ask if a letter can help the stationer sell that sort of paper, especially when the letter itself could be typed on a sheet of that very paper. Is it necessary, however, to write like this?

SPEAKING OF LOVE LETTERS-

which we weren't of course, but I must start this somehow, I've just been reading how love letters were written back in the so-called "Stone Age."

It seems that the village sheik would pound his passionate pleas on a slab of stone and toss it over the back yard fence of his sheba.

If his message happened to strike her right, while wandering in the garden, I'll bet it made quite an impression.

The modern method is much nicer, I think.

Imagine how many tons of stone 'twould take to write a hundred letters! And the chisels and the hammers one would have to keep on hand.

How much better is a box of our good stationery! Two hundred sheets of fine paper, perfectly printed with your name and address and a hundred envelopes to match.

No wonder folks like to write letters when good stationery is so easy to get and so inexpensive.

And if you are one of those clever enough to make up your Christmas List early, you'll want to include stationery for your friends or members of your family. It's always gladly received.

Yes, we'll ship direct, anywhere you say, just before Christmas.

Cordially yours,

This is a clever letter. It is all right, perhaps, for this firm to use; but it is well to remember that letters which are merely clever are more likely to get a laugh than an order.

Directness and Heartiness. What a different impression is made by the heartiness and directness of the following letter!

Dear Mrs. White:

The best answer I can make to your inquiry about our fish is the circular enclosed. If you are really fond of good fish, I am sure you will enjoy reading it.

There is nothing I can add to it—except possibly to emphasize the point that my fish really are quite different from the store kind. My thirty years' experience has taught me a lot about the fish business. And what I've learned, I've turned into account for my customers.

I am growing gray. I have a nice business, and my fondest desire is that Frank E. Davis' name may never mean anything to anyone, anywhere, but pleasant, satisfactory, honest dealing.

Send any order you wish from the enclosed circular with perfect confidence that it will please you or I will refund your money.

Yours very truly,

A Newspaper Utilizes Letters. Even newspapers, which reach so many persons through their columns, believe they can reach others by letter. They can, when their letters have the ring of reality, like this, addressed individually from *The United States Daily*, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Bell:

Here are two stories:

A member of President Coolidge's Cabinet had been ill. It was necessary that he stay in bed.

A receiver of a railroad spent a week in Washington, looking after his affairs. There he saw a new national newspaper. He purchased several copies.

The Cabinet Member, The Hon. James J. Davis, told how he kept in touch with Government matters during his illness. He said, "During the ten days I was confined to my bed I felt that I might be away from everything, but really, gentlemen, *The United States Daily* kept me right up to the minute on events in Washington."

The Receiver for The Danville and Mount Morris Railroad, Mr. E. M. Harter, returned home and then sent in his subscription, adding, "I very much enjoy the paper. I was in Washington for the past week but will now be glad to have Washington brought to my desk."

The United States Daily offers to place the only complete daily record of the Government of the United States on your desk every working day. It contains Government information which you may be able to use when you prepare new selling arguments for products or services you sell by mail.

The enclosed circular tells the story. The enclosed stamped reply postal is for your convenience. Have someone type your name and address as you want it to appear on the wrapper, and mail the card to me. Your signature isn't necessary. We know your responsibility.

Yours very truly,

Circulation Manager

Selling Good-Will. Besides commodities and service, business sells good-will. Such a letter as the following seeks to build business on the strength of the firm's service to the community; in this case the long-continued patronage the concern has received is used to suggest the far-sighted and responsible character of its policies.

Dear Sir:

Permit us to introduce ourselves—The Straus Brothers Company—a house of integrity and sound principles. Perhaps you already know of us for, as investment bankers, we have served three generations of satisfied clients.

Since our founding in 1860 every dollar of principal and interest on every bond and mortgage issued and sold by The Straus Brothers Company has been paid promptly on the day due. No record could insure greater safety. The sound, conservative rules established by our founders make the bonds we issue now conform in safety to our issues of the past.

Isn't this the type of house with which you wish to deal—Investment Bankers who have been serving for over sixty-six years and will continue to serve when fly-by-night houses have passed out of existence.

You have earned money and saved money. You wish to keep it absolutely safe, yet earning the highest yield compatible with safety. What you need then, is to invest with a house whose greatest interest is the safety of its bonds and the protection of its clients.

We shall tell you more about Real Estate Investments in a few days.

Very truly yours,

Expressing Company Character. I remember a department store in the city where I grew up whose slogan, "Your Grandmother Traded Here," fascinated me even as a child. I felt as if I had some real connection with that store, for, in truth, my grandmother had traded there. Like others whose policies are far-sighted, it tried to make its customers feel that their good-will had been earned by long, consistent service.

Through its letters a firm may project itself into thousands of homes and offices, always giving an impression of a living person. If a firm's letters come often enough, the reader becomes familiar with the letterhead and the set-up, and no less with the attitude of dignity, courtesy, and fairness which they express. Steady care for the spirit and form of the letters it sends out is one of the ways a firm can build up a reputation for having "character."

Collecting Money. Often it is easier to sell than it is to collect; yet the letter is a very good way to collect money. It is not so embarrassing as a face-to-face request for payment, yet it often is as effective as and generally costs far less than a personal call.

The collection letter which follows is one of the examples given by Robert M. Dulin of the Gates Rubber Company.¹ Note how skilfully the writer presents his message. We can well understand the comment on it by one executive: "A good reminder; strong but not too strong; courteous but definite."

Dear Mr. : . . :

I'll admit that I have overlooked something.

It looks as if you forgot, too.

I mean that I didn't send you the cold, stern letter that I usually send out when accounts begin to get to the sixty-day period. I guess the truth is that I was unconsciously counting on you to send along a check about the middle of the mouth.

Of course, you know the situation as well as I do. To have business move as it should, we have to jog the memory of even our best friends.

Sometimes we draw on our customers when thirty days have expired. I am sure you don't want us to do that in your case.

Look the matter up, won't you, and let us have your check by return mail?

Sincerely yours,

Talking to Thousands, If We Wish. We all know that we can write more letters in a day than we can make personal.

Robert M. Dulin, Collection Letters, The Ronald Press Company.

calls, even if each letter is written individually. When we think that letters can be run off by the thousand whenever we have an impersonal message, for instance, we begin to realize that there is no question of the ability of the letter to reach hundreds and thousands where the man himself could only see and talk to dozens.

CHAPTER II

WHAT'S BEHIND LETTER FAILURES

Why Do Letters Fail? Why do so many letters fail? Of course there are many reasons. The letter is seldom any more powerful than the man who wrote it; in general, its defects and weaknesses are his too; but in particular there are three kinds of weaknesses that it may show. As a sheet of paper, it may be unattractive; as a piece of writing it may be ineffective; as a representative of the firm, it may be short-sighted.

Careless Appearance. It happens often that a letter creates a very unfavorable impression because of defects of form, disregard for what might be called the externals of good letterwriting.

I wish you could actually take in your hand the letter which lies before me. It is typed on a flimsy, grayish sheet of paper of a quality hardly above the practice tablets furnished to school boys to figure their arithmetic problems on. The letter-head is unevenly printed in a heavy block type that jumps out at the reader from the letter page. Besides the unattractiveness of the letter sheet itself, what a story the typing tells! The ribbon was worn, evidently with holes in it; the type was clogged; the machine itself, a cripple. And the typist has struck the keys unevenly, spaced incorrectly after punctuation, and used the capital "I" for the figure one.

Besides these blemishes there are many others, some of typing and some in language, that can be best shown by reproducing the letter as it is: afterward we shall discuss certain points one by one, referring to each by number as indicated.

oct. 17th. 2 /3 284

Friend Barton 6:7

Your letter rec'd8 9 & 10 11 was glad to hear from you. Now about the planer. 12 it 13 is a good machine. 14 Small but O. K. 15 16 the 17 size 1818" wide between housings 19 15 1/2" rise on the head. 20 & 10 4 1/2' table. their 21 are no stops.²² angle irons or chuck with it.²³ but there is a good counter shaft & 10 a planer grinding attachment.24 they used to do surface grinding with.25 I dont26 have any time to myself now.27 have to stay here and wait on trade.28 so I cant29 get out to try to sell it. you30 won't have to go to the expense to come & 10 look at it.31 unless you want to. Send me a check for \$35.00 and if you find that the machine is not what you want

2 th in 17th should be omitted.

⁵ The inside address is omitted entirely.

⁶ The salutation of the letter, Friend Barton, is old-fashioned.

⁷ The semicolon is improperly used after the salutation. Always use a colon (:).

8 rec'd should not be abbreviated.

9 Part of the verb phrase was—in was received is omitted. The passive verb form was received is weak.

10 & here and elsewhere should be written out: and.

12 Now about the planer, although a fragment, happens to have idiomatic sanction, and might stand.

18 it should begin with a capital letter. 14 machine should be followed by a comma.

15 Small but O. K. is a fragment—not a complete sentence; therefore, small should not begin with a capital.

16 O. K. might well be translated in good condition.

17 the should begin with a capital letter.

18 is, the verb, is omitted.

19 housings should be followed by a comma. 20 The period should be omitted after head.

- 21 their is misspelled. There (the correct spelling) should begin with a
 - 22 Stops should be followed by a comma, instead of a period. ²³ It should be followed by a semicolon instead of a period. 24 attachment should not be followed by a period.

²⁵ The relative clause here beginning with they would be in better grammatical form if it read: that has been used for surface grinding.

26 dont needs an apostrophe between the n and t because it is a contraction for do not.

²⁷ The subject I at the beginning of the next sentence is omitted. 28 trade should be followed by a comma instead of a period. 29 cant requires an apostrophe to indicate the omission of letters.

30 you should begin with a capital.

31 it should be followed by a semicolon or comma instead of a period.

¹ October, like all other names of months, should begin with a capital letter. The word should not be abbreviated.

³ Diagonal separation marks should not be used; a comma should follow day instead of period.
28 should be written 1928.

you may send it back. I will go to Millton and ship it.32 as soon as I hear from you.

³³Planer grinding attachment & ¹⁰(2)³⁴ counter shafts. I havnt³⁵ been in Boston for 636 months.37 hope to get down soon.

> Yours Truly38 39 Geo. W. Cotter

First of all, go through this letter and take each definite mistake as it appears, given in the footnotes. They are nearly all points that would be caught in any good course in business letters.

Some of these errors come from a mistaken idea that it is more modest to omit a first-person pronoun, when it is the subject of a sentence. Others seem to be the result of sheer carelessness and indifference, the &'s for instance. A letter that is written in careless language and put together in slipshod form is no credit to the man who writes it and no compliment to the man who receives it.

Sterling Qualities in This Letter-Only the Form Is Bad. And yet, aside from its external form, this letter has some sterling qualities. When you look beyond the defects of form, you see that the writer knows what he is talking about. He expresses himself with vigorous directness. And finally a most important point, the letter conveys a manly, friendly attitude.

³² the period after it should be omitted.

³³ the verb is omitted from the next sentence: Planer grinding attachment & (2) counter shafts.

^{34 (2)} should be written two.

^{** *}Havnt is misspelled; the e and the apostrophe are omitted.

** Havnt is misspelled; the e and the apostrophe are omitted.

** 6 should be written out.

** In the last sentence, the subject I is omitted.

** In the complimentary closing Truly should begin with a small letter.

** The complimentary closing should be followed by a comma.

Suppose we see how it would look when the defects of form have been remedied.

2 Martin Street Blanton, Mass. October 17, 1928

Mr. L. B. Barton 204 Washington Street Dorchester, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Barton:

I was glad to hear from you. The planer is a good machine, small but O.K. It is $18^{\prime\prime}$ wide between the housings, with a $15\frac{1}{2}^{\prime\prime}$ rise on the head, and a $4\frac{1}{2}^{\prime}$ table. There are no stops, angle irons, or chuck with it, but there is a good counter shaft and a planer grinding attachment that has been used for surface grinding.

I don't have any time to myself now—have to stay here and wait on trade—so that I can't get out to try to sell the machine. But you won't have to go to the expense of coming to look at it unless you want to. Send me a check for \$35.00 and if you find that the planer is not what you want you may send it back. I will go to Millton and ship it, with the planer grinding attachment and two counter shafts, as soon as I hear from you.

I haven't been in Boston for six months, but hope to get down soon.

Yours truly, George W. Cotter

Would it not be amply worth while for Mr. Cotter and the many intelligent and able persons like him, who have never turned their attention to the *technique* of letter-writing, to see that their written language is correct and effective?

Poor Thinking. Defects of poor thinking are just as bad as defects of careless appearance, although less easily recognized. Here is a letter written by a man who lacked confidence in his ideas; who did not take the time to form a well-grounded decision beforehand. When the writer started this letter, apparently he had no very definite idea how it was going to end. Since he trusted to luck that he could think the problem out as he went along, he was careful not to say anything that he couldn't undo later. As usual, when a letter-writer gropes in the dark, the letter is vague.

Dear Friends:

The writer just returned the end of last week from the mill and I am very anxious indeed to get to see you. I note from a letter sent some time ago that you expected to be in New York shortly. Will you please let me know by return mail if you are coming here and, if so, when?

There is just one thought I want to pass on to you. There isn't any one in this country who thinks less of our performance this year than I do. There isn't any one who has suffered more anguish than I have. There isn't any one who has suffered the money losses that the mill as a whole has and, yet, in spite of it all, there isn't any one at any time or about any thing more enthusiastic than we are right now. We can see everything that is desirable from a standpoint of success and happiness right ahead of us.

Of course, there are good reasons for this feeling, and that is why I want to see you quickly. I want you to know the reasons.

Let us know by return mail just how you are situated and whether you are coming here or not.

Yours very truly,

Let us look at this letter:

- 1. The writer, a person spoken of, becomes I, the speaker, before the first sentence is over. This unnecessary shift in point of view is the beginning of the correspondent's floundering.
- 2. The sentence at the end of the first paragraph is practically repeated at the end of the letter. That is a clear indication that after jumping to the end of his message the writer had to retrace his steps to pick up various details.

- 3. At the beginning of the second paragraph the reader learns "There is just one thought I want to pass on to you"; but, if that thought is, as it appears to be, that the writer is a long-suffering person, the reader may well be excused if he gets bored. Moreover, the writer seems to be word-poor; the any one's, any time's, any thing's and everything's in that paragraph say nothing!
- 4. Yet how inconsistent such a whipped-dog attitude is with the last sentence in the paragraph, "We can see everything that is desirable from a standpoint of success and happiness ahead of us."

Suppose, on the contrary, that this writer had known what he was going to say, that he had had imagination enough to see the bearing of one fact on another. Suppose that he not only felt sure he could set his reader straight, but had such command of language that the best word to match each idea sprang into his mind instantly—then he would have had no difficulty in seeing the fine points of the letter problem, and in giving those ideas an exact, yet vivid expression.

The foregoing letter is so utterly without plan or point that one could hardly attempt to make a revision which would surely convey the writer's idea. For that reason let us consider another example of the rambling letter whose message is nearly but not quite buried in words. Below the original text appears the same message boiled down.

With reference to your communication of April 13 addressed to Mr. ——, Jr. please be advised that Mr. ——, Jr. left for Chicago yesterday and that he will be absent during the next ten days. In lieu of personal attention we are happy to render the service required and have pleasure in registering our endorsement of Miss—— as a capable, indefatigable worker. She has initiative and brains and knows how to use them. There can be no question as regards her integrity, character, loyalty, etc.

Faithfully yours,

Since Mr. —— will be out of town for the next ten days, I am happy to indorse in his stead Miss —— as a capable, untiring worker. She has initiative and brains and knows how to use them. There can be no question regarding her integrity, character, and loyalty.

Faithfully yours,

Wrong Tone and Spirit. Then there is the defect of lack of taste and judgment in the *tone*, which renders the letter a poor representative of the company's attitude and character. Here is a letter which is full of extravagant, boastful claims for goods and service. The writer may, or may not, be sincere. One thing is sure; if he himself doesn't believe a word he says, he can deceive no reader who has cut his eye-teeth.

But if he is sincere, if he has proof of the excellence of his product or service, the question remains: should he assert so strongly that his goods are the best, and that his sales are the largest, and that his prices are the lowest? An expert in advertising and letter-writing would tell him that the convincing letter is worded modestly; whatever claims it makes for its commodities are expressed in definite words that give the impression of merit, without claiming unsurpassable perfection.

Esteemed Patron:

TO THE CELEBRATION OF OUR THIRTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY AND EASTER SALE you are cordially invited. We have spared neither effort nor expense in selecting from the leading manufacturers of America their choicest productions and now have ready for your inspection a Spring style exhibit of surpassing brilliance in dependable clothing for men, women, boys and girls. We have cut prices to "bed rock" and during this Sale, you are certain to make a Substantial Money-Saving on Your Spring Outfit.

We hand you, herewith, our merchandise check which we will accept as \$1.00 (one dollar) on any purchase you may make at this store, as per conditions printed thereon. By this means we wish to show our gratitude for your valued patronage, that has meant so much toward our success. In addition, we will pay you \$1.00 (one dollar) in cash for every customer whom you will recommend that opens an account with us. So Bring Your Friends With You.

We thank you sincerely for your past favors, and assure you that Our Highest Ambition Will Be to Continue to Serve You so as to Merit a Continuance of Your Valued Patronage. Trusting we may be privileged to Meet and Greet You During Our Thirty-Third Anniversary and Easter Sale and again thanking you, we remain,

Very truly yours,

In this connection we may mention again the grave error of would-be cleverness, already touched upon in the previous chapter. In what ways and to what extent do you suppose the following letter helped the concern which sent it out? It was mimeographed on a sheet of ordinary paper, with a cartoon showing the young employee standing before the desk of the president:

A young man, asking his employer for a raise a few days ago received—so he tells me—the following pointed reply: "Why do you want a raise? There are 365 days in a year; you work eight hours a day and that is 122. There are 52 Sundays in a year and you get them off, and that leaves 70 days; there are 14 holidays, which leaves you 54 days; you take an hour off for lunch, which makes 14 days, which leaves you 40 days; you get Saturday afternoons off, which makes 26 days, which leaves you 14 days, and I give you two weeks' vacation each year—when do you work, anyway?"

When you finish figuring this out, just figure up how many Battery Boxes you can use and how much you can save by filling in the enclosed order blank.—And remember—

EVERY BOX—A BOX FULL OF SERVICE
BLANKENBERG BOX AND MANUFACTURING CO.
BLANKENBERG NEW YORK

Routine Letters—Beware of "Routine" Language. One of the sorest spots in business letter-writing is the language used in the letters that handle routine business. Routine letters—how many of them are written—hundreds—thousands—millions! Letters answering inquiries, letters acknowledging receipts, letters ordering goods, tracing shipments, doing the ordinary work of the business. Everybody writes them—and everybody gets them. Offhand, we should say that seldom does one of them present to the correspondent any unusual difficulty in handling. Yet, how few of them have any force or effectiveness! Is not the reason for their mediocrity that we let them slip into "routine" language, "thanking," "advising," "noting," and "begging"!—as Carolyn Wells says in the Saturday Evening Post?

They beg to inquire and they beg to state, They beg to advise and they beg to relate;

They beg to observe and they beg to mention, They beg to call to your kind attention:

They beg to remark and they beg to remind, They beg to inform you will herein find;

They beg to announce and they beg to intrude, They beg to explain and they beg to include;

They beg to acknowledge, they beg to reply, They beg to apologize, beg to deny;

They reluctantly beg for a moment of time, They beg to submit you an offer sublime;

Till I wish I could put the annoying array
Of beggars on horseback and send them away!

Some Practical Suggestions. What shall we do about the routine letters? Here are a few suggestions:

- 1. Let the correspondent remember that although he may not be interested in what these letters say, the reader is, because the information they contain ought to answer his questions and solve his problems.
- 2. Let him realize that the routine letter stands for the spirit of the house.
- 3. Let him take into account that when a routine letter does not give all the pertinent facts, more and more letters must be written until the tangle is straightened out.
- 4. Let him be assured that form paragraphs, guides, and letters can reduce the number of routine letters that have to be personally dictated.
- 5. Let him reflect that business lingo makes routine letters dull and moss-grown even to the dictator.

The Story the Carbons Tell. Incidentally, whatever we do by letter is almost automatically recorded on the carbon. This fact should be a significant one both to the dictator and to the

^{1 &}quot;The Beggars," The Saturday Evening Post, June 9, 1923. By permission.

typist. The dictator should realize that every day his decisions and his character, as shown by the carbons of his letters, are being cataloged and filed. What an incentive he has to put the best of his ability into his work! The typist also is piling up evidence for or against her technical ability. Aside from her personal pride in her work she has a real responsibility to have the carbons clear.

Sherman Perry in one of the American Rolling Mill Company's Bulletins says—

"Recently, I received a whole sheaf of carbon copies to read. They were so faint and so smeared by eraser marks that I could have read them only with a reading glass, and that I didn't have. Such carbons are no good. They serve only to irritate the person to whom they go. But good, clear, easy-to-read carbons are mighty important. They're our PERMANENT RECORDS."

The mails are choked with letter failures. But we are far more interested in learning how to put out effective letters—letters that will make our plans for success come true.

CHAPTER III

ANALYZING THE LETTER TRANSACTION

How Well Do You Know Your Reader? When a business man is getting ready to write, the first thing he does is to try to picture in his mind's eye what sort of person the reader may be. Truly, there are many ways of "knowing your customer."

Sometimes the writer knows his reader personally. He may be a friend, or the friend of a friend, a business acquaintance, a former customer, or a prominent man. Occasionally, perhaps, the writer may have gained an impression of the man he is addressing from a salesman's report, or may have picked up a certain knowledge of him from newspapers or trade journals, and often he can gather a few facts about his standing from a business rating source such as Dun's or Bradstreet's. Under such circumstances the writer can prepare to speak to that reader, more or less, as if they were face to face.

How much more intelligently we can serve the needs of our reader if we know him! Take the matter of how much goods one of our dealers ought to carry. We might wish we could sell him a carload, and, by a great stretch of imagination, we might even be able to hypnotize him into buying that much. But if we did, and he happened to have only a small place of business, which even his good friends would characterize as a "hole in the wall," and no storage warehouse, we could not flatter ourselves that we were serving his needs intelligently.

Moreover, if we know our reader personally, we can be much surer of selecting goods that will appeal to his taste and to that of his trade. We can also arouse in him a feeling that we are friendly and wish to satisfy his desire for attractive goods and efficient service.

Even with Strangers, the "You" Attitude. But, alas, personal acquaintance with every reader is impossible. Often the reader's name is merely one among thousands. Must the writer then give up the attempt to understand his reader's point of view? Not at all. If the writer has a sympathetic, constructive imagination—moreover, if he is a student of psychology and has observed "human behavior"—he can picture the reader, mentally, very nearly as he is. We all know how easily our own "feelings are hurt"; or how pleased we are to be remembered; how much we appreciate the cordial greeting, the tactful remark, the sincere, helpful criticism. We may assume that the man who reads our letter—whoever and wherever he may be—will have much the same feelings, and respond to stimuli in much the same way.

We should always take what is called the "you" attitude, find out how we can successfully put ourselves in the reader's place, know how to take his point of view, and look at our goods and service through his eyes. The large concern with its extensive patronage is careful to follow certain principles or policies, in regard to granting credit, adjusting difficulties, or collecting money, which are based upon its own or some one else's experience, and have been proved to be fair and reasonable. Regardless of how these policies may vary between firms or lines of business, they always reflect the appreciation which the concern has for its customers and friends, and look forward to keeping their trade for years, perhaps for generations. If the letters the firm sends out are to express these policies successfully, they must always maintain the "you" attitude.

The Letter-Writer's Character—Integrity. In the letter transaction the reader is one party; the writer is the other. Let us try to see the writer as an individual, a social being and a correspondent; although it is not possible to keep these three aspects entirely separate.

When a business concern hires a man to write its letters,

it satisfies itself, first, that he has the fundamental characteristics of honesty, justice, and loyalty. It knows that all day long the correspondent will work with commodities, money, and ideas that are not his own. Since he is to be entrusted with secrets, he must be worthy of the confidence that is placed in him. Since he will be faced with facts, he must be honest enough to deal with them as they are.

—Intelligence. The firm also knows that the business writer needs to be intelligent, because if a man cannot understand his work, he cannot do it efficiently. Those who know best agree that it requires a high grade of intelligence to represent a business concern on paper; moreover, that such superiority is vital, for an unintelligent letter may bring an almost endless chain of unfortunate results. To send out many such letters might be truly disastrous. Thought power is the basis of language power—the executive must have both. The good correspondent needs both, also, for even if he has not yet arrived at the top, he may be reasonably regarded as an administrator in the making.

—Individuality. A third quality of the good correspondent is his ability to give individuality to what he writes. If he has a good personality and dares to express it in his letters, he has learned one of the most precious secrets of letter-writing. For, just as it is true that the salesman must sell himself before he can sell his goods, so the writer must express his personality naturally and forcefully if he is to make the reader believe in the sincerity, reliability, and power of the house which he, as correspondent, represents.

—A Man Among Men. What all this means is that the successful correspondent is first of all a person with strong character, good brains, and the moral courage to be himself. When he has finished the letter transaction, he feels, as every-

body else involved does, that he has acted as best he possibly can, and that his best is adequate to the situation; such a person's letters are bound to be forceful because he himself is forceful. The correspondent is, however, not only an individual, but a man among men. He cannot possibly live by himself or for himself, alone. Thus he soon makes a network of connections and relations which radiate in all directions and are endless in their responsibilities and consequences.

—A Representative of the House. When a correspondent elects to identify himself with a certain business house, he thereby definitely endorses its policies and its ideals. In particular, he undertakes to represent it whenever he writes its letters. This attitude is brought out in the manuals and bulletins which many large companies are getting out for the guidance of their stenographers and dictators.

"Kodak letters should reflect the high character and the standing of our company. This is particularly true because most people with whom we deal know us through our letters"—reads the Eastman Kodak manual.

"Our letters in composition and in mechanical and artistic execution should match our character and reputation in the business world"—says the Westinghouse Electric Company.

"Every letter we write becomes an individual responsibility. To our reader we, you and I, become Wilson and Company"—points out a big packing house bulletin.

—Responsible Leadership Within the Office. The letter-writer may also have a responsibility of leadership within his own office. He will need to get the cooperation of others in such matters as the gathering of facts, finding correspondence, checking figures and the like. But more vital than any detail of his work, is his help in maintaining the morale of the office force; the help he can give the firm in putting across its policies to its employees, its agents and its customers.

—Courtesy. The letter-writer must cultivate courtesy—nay, he must radiate it. Courtesy goes down into the roots of character; it is a sort of constant unselfishness that shines through the expression of a gentleman unmistakably and inevitably. Unfailing courtesy is the letter-writer's best ally, for it promotes good-will.

As a Craftsman. Besides being a worthy man with good business and social qualities, the writer must know his art. Although not all correspondents appreciate what an effective opening wedge the ability to write is—some do. Many a youngster in the correspondence department might profit by knowing in advance that the satisfaction of his longing for power and responsibility is largely dependent on his present ability to use good English.

How much more impressive is the value of a forceful style to the correspondent who knows from experience that, day in and day out, he will use his language powers in the performance of his duties. The seasoned dictator knows well enough that although the originals of his letters go out, the carbons remain, forming a permanent record of his decisions and his interpretation of business policies. Again and again they may be referred to by the man higher up. No wonder he sees in better letters a way of achieving an enviable record for good judgment and vision. In the long run, he knows that language power is bound to receive appreciation from his chief and to win advancement in position and salary.

Writing "Better Letters"—Careful Planning. How can the correspondent learn to write "better letters" whatever the occasion? Those who have studied the process set down three main requirements.

The first is advance planning of the letter. First, the writer should read the previous correspondence; second, he should analyze it point by point until he knows the story; third, he should collect the facts required to serve the reader's interest;

fourth, he should verify any doubtful facts or figures; fifth, he should try to foresee the effect of the particular immediate action on the relation of the customer and firm as a whole; and sixth, he should outline mentally or on paper, the order of steps which the composition of the letter involves.

—Consistency in Following the Plan. The second requirement is to follow that plan intelligently, by (1) stating the business of the letter at once; (2) passing directly from one detail to another; (3) interpreting the policies of the firm consistently; (4) aiming to get favorable action on the part of the reader.

—Willingness to Take Responsibility. The third main requirement is perhaps the most important of all—willingness on the part of the letter-writer to show initiative and take responsibility when the situation calls for it. In this part of his work the correspondent has a chance to show his mettle. He must not take any hazards with the reputation of the concern; he must be keenly aware of the effect which the letter in question will have on the business as a whole; yet, he must be decisive, and, as nearly as possible, always right.

To write supremely well requires a lifetime of training, but a good course of study in business letter-writing and English composition as applied to the needs of business is an excellent foundation for any other sort of writing you may have to do. The correspondent must not be content merely to know what, but how, for writing is at once a science and an art. It requires study to obtain knowledge—plus practice, to acquire skill.

CHAPTER IV

THE PAPER IT IS WRITTEN ON

The First Step in Selling—Attractive Appearance. One of the best means for attracting favorable attention to your letter message is through your actual letter sheet which the business man spreads before him on his desk. The letterhead tells him whom the letter is from; good paper gives him an impression of the firm's commercial standing; neat typing shows carefulness on the part of the stenographer, and a forceful signature says a good word for the man who penned it. These matters are the subject of the following letter sent out in a folio by a Canadian paper company, which, like the writing paper concerns in the United States, is serving others by raising the standards of letter appearance, at the same time that it is promoting its own welfare.

My dear Mr. Letter-Writer:

A letter conveys two things; a message and an impression.

The message is what you dictate.

The impression is created by the letter heading, by the quality of the paper, by the style and reproduction of the design; and also by the care which is taken by your stenographer in observing the somewhat formal rules which govern letter-writing, and those of typography.

Obviously, a letter which in all these points bears the hallmark of self-respect, stands a far better chance of being received with respect than one cheaply printed on poor paper, and typed in a slovenly, slipshod manner.

Yours faithfully,

Color. Good taste has generally prescribed for letterheads white paper of good quality with envelopes to match, but the beautiful tinted papers now on the market have lured many business firms away from Mrs. Grundy's dictum that business letter paper should be white.

Grade and Finish. There are several grades of paper used for letterheads—most of them in linen bond, in such various finishes as: wove, glazed, ripple, and parchment. Twenty-pound folio (of which 500 sheets, 17" x 22", weigh 20 pounds) is heavy enough to do credit to the reproduction of the letterhead design and to allow necessary erasures in typing to be made expertly. Sixteen-pound folio is lighter, yet reasonably good, and twenty-four pound is enough heavier than the twenty-pound to make the letter sheet stand out in the day's mail.

Size of Sheet. The large sheets $(17" \times 22")$ are cut into letterhead sizes, generally measuring $8\frac{1}{2}" \times 11"$; although sometimes $5\frac{1}{2}" \times 8"$, or $6" \times 9"$, is used for letters that are sent to persons in their homes. Some firms have also profited by the suggestion of printers to have their paper cut in sizes that are "wasteless."

Quality. Letterhead sheets and second sheets should match in quality. They should be heavy enough to produce a substantial effect and to be able to meet the test of the man who holds a paper to the light; recognizes a reliable water-mark when he sees one; and smiles in appreciation when he hears that most distinctive of quality signs—the crackle.

Letter Costs. Of course good paper costs more than poor, but the cost of a letter sheet of good bond paper, together with its somewhat lighter weight envelope, is about one cent—practically the smallest item in letter costs. To offset this is the good impression made, the value of which may be tremendous.

Some conservative figures on letter costs, which, of course, vary greatly, are given in the next rather forceful letter:

Gentlemen:

Paper is the background of your letter; the background of the impression created by it on the mind of its reader. The effect of paper is largely subconscious—and therefore lasting. A man senses the quality of paper used in a letter as surely as he rubs his thumb over a business card to see if it is engraved.

Yet, if one throws away the obvious advantage of using a first grade stock to secure the economy of a cheaper grade, the saving, after all, is infinitesimal in comparison with the total cost. Following is the result of a careful analysis of the cost of a letter—the total cost:

Executive's time dictating	\$.15	per letter
Stenographer's wages		- <i>((</i>
Office overhead and supplies		ee ee
Postage		
A good envelope	.0045	
Best bond paper	.0055	66 66
Total cost	\$.28	per letter

This cost is an average; but it is a safe average. It shows that the cost of the finest bond paper made (1/2c a letter) is only 2% of the entire cost of your letter.

Suppose you tried to economize: by using a cheap grade of bond you

could reduce the cost of the paper to 1/4c a letter—a saving of 1%.

Surely it is poor economy to try to save 1%, and risk wasting the other 99% by the poor impression made by the cheap paper. On a later page of this portfolio is a diagram which shows the above table expressed in percentages.

Below is another letter which shows how a paper company appeals to the self-interest of the business man by playing up the significance of good letter stationery:

Relation of the Letterhead to the whole Letter:

Genteely clothed—yea, handsomely clothed from Knox to Nettletons—all except the cravat. That's frayed and faded—out-of-shape and generally disreputable. Why? Because he paid too little for it. Spoiled!—the effect of over a hundred dollars worth of fine clothing for the price of a balcony seat.

The scarf is a very trivial part of a man's dress from the standpoint of expense, but what an important part it plays from the appearance angle.

Figuring in all the items, including the dictator's time, the letterhead represents about 5% of the cost of the total letter, but what a negative influence a questionable letterhead can have—printed on shabby, shoddy paper.

Why risk it? Make a careful mental estimate now of your stationery. Is it representative of your company's highest ideals? Does it fit in with your four-square methods? Use candor.

Then, if you have any doubts whatsoever, consult a concern experienced in stationery and paper—an organization familiar with the ins and outs of the business of building good will by use of the printed page.

We are—yours very truly,

A Chart for the Paper User. Wouldn't it be good common sense to use exactly the right grade of paper for every paper use? In its advertising, a certain paper company features its "Specification Chart of Bond Paper Uses," a guide to expert paper selection:

Charted:

What restrains us from putting neat's foot oil in the crank-case of the old bus?

Mainly, the oil charts compiled and distributed at great cost and infinite pains by the oil companies—a big boon to most of us who know nothing about oil.

With regard to people's knowledge of paper, it is very much like oil. Who knows what to use for which? Few—but the experts.

And so we have come to a paper chart complied by experts.

The big idea behind the Specification Chart of Bond Paper Uses is economy—not the pinchback variety, but a broad policy of economy to eliminate waste, to save money, time, and effort—to foster "the RIGHT paper for the purpose."

For instance, a 65% bond paper used for Time Tickets. That's a type of waste at the roots of which the Specification Chart strikes. Still another waste is expressed by the use of a 19c all-wood bond for Sales Letters, which undermines with its cheap, flimsy character the very thing the letter itself so splendidly aims to accomplish.

You will find one of these Specification Charts enclosed. This Chart—its aim and purpose—has our endorsement—it represents the basis on which we try to handle the business of our customer friends—real economy and accuracy, as well as the first consideration—Quality. Command us.

Yours very truly,

CHAPTER V

CHOOSING THE LETTERHEAD

Announcing Who You Are. When you have selected from among many paper samples the one that, everything considered, suits your needs, tastes, and budget the best, will you give an equal amount of consideration to your letterhead design? You should, for your letterhead tells in so many words who you are, and shows by a dozen other tokens what you are. Ask yourself: "Does it tell truly?" "Does it represent me justly?" Is it attractive? Is it dignified? Is it strong? Does it conform to the standards of good taste? Is it of the same caliber as that which the best concern in your line in the country would issue from a similar department? If not, then it is an admission of your inferiority.

Besides considering the paper, you should decide which of the three processes—printing, lithographing, or die-stamping will best reproduce your letterhead design. You should go further, for there may be several other points which may prevent that letterhead from achieving the effect you admire most. Some one thing in particular may be holding it back in its task of unifying the letter, body and soul.

Simplicity. Perhaps your letterhead is not simple enough to lend an impression of dignity. Experiment a bit. Take off the frills and see what a strong effect is obtained by merely displaying the name of the concern, its address, and perhaps the telephone number and cable address. At least, such simplicity is little likely to render the letterhead undesirable by repeatedly deflecting and withholding the attention of the reader so that he can't get down to the business of concentrating on your message.



FIGURE 1. SPECIMEN LETTERHEADS

Variety. However, all business purposes are not best served by the strictly simple letterhead. Indeed, many concerns, like the American Radiator Company, The Westinghouse Electric Company, and the S. D. Warren Company (see Figure I), use a simple embossed letterhead for executive purposes, but for sales and service letters they use a lithographed or printed illustrated letterhead, in order to appeal to the eye, which grasps pictures more quickly than words.

Illustrations on Letterheads. If the concern elects to use some of the white space in the margin of the letter sheet to give further detail about itself or its product, there are many items clamoring for preference. Consider what item you would choose to intensify your letters. The names of the directors, especially if they are prominent men, may add prestige. A cut of an extensive manufacturing plant may suggest the reliability of a well-established firm. A map, diagram or graphic curve may convey detailed or involved information much more simply than words can. An illustration in natural color may promote sales economically, in spite of the relatively high cost of printing or lithographing it.

Even the lower margin of the letter sheet, by bearing either an illustration or a printed line of pungent import, may be used to intensify the appeal of the letter. Mr. Paul Kearney cites several instances. He reminds us that this space on Thomas Edison's letterhead quite appropriately announced: "Dictated to the Ediphone"; on the National Biscuit Company's it reminded the reader: "P.S. Uneeda Biscuit"; and on that of the S. D. Warren Company it carried in neat printing the specification of the paper on which the letter was typed. Trade marks, slogans, seals, and holiday greetings and such information as: "This letter is from the office of ———," and "Address your reply to ———," have been reproduced in the space at the bottom of the sheet without violating good taste which counsels against advertising too prominently on the letter page.

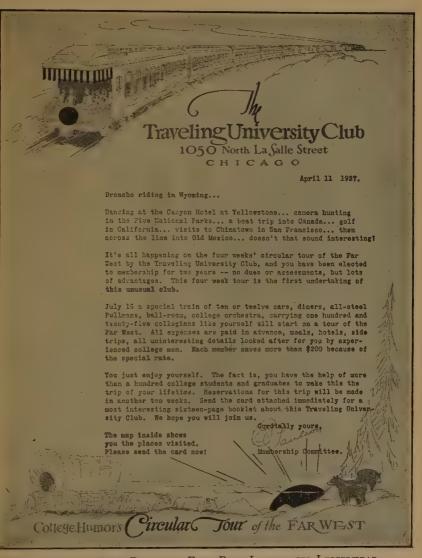


FIGURE 2a. FIRST PAGE OF A FOUR-PAGE ILLUSTRATED LETTERHEAD

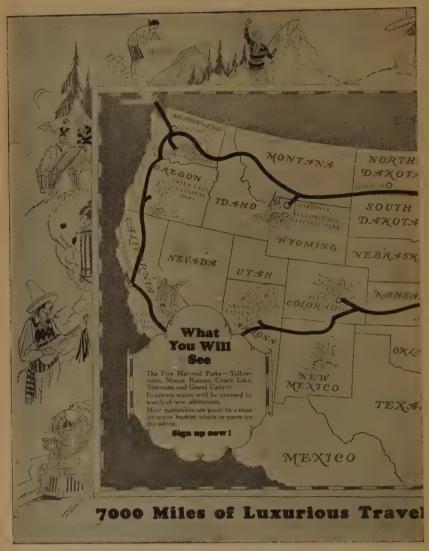


FIGURE 2b. PAGES 2 AND 3 OF A



FOUR-PAGE ILLUSTRATED LETTERHEAD

The Four-Page Letterhead. The usual so-called illustrated letterhead is four pages long, as shown in Figure 2. The first page may adhere to the simple letter arrangement that is so effective in carrying the letter message; pages 2 and 3 may be devoted to a presentation of the product; and page 4 may be left blank. This plan enables the writer to cover the details of the particular message in his typed letter, and depend upon the reader's grasping the main points of the sales proposition from the illustrated matter on pages 2 and 3. Incidentally, when the letter is filed, the advertisement is filed with it.

Without question the illustrated letterhead costs so much more than the single white sheet that its use should be carefully controlled and tested. It is preeminently a "sales" letter. The use of a series of such letters, using for each one a different letterhead specially designed, makes it possible to divide the sales talk into a number of parts, giving each a new and attractive dress.

Color Harmony. Color is used on the letter page to attract attention to one particular point or feature, or to give life to the letter page as a whole. But whether it is used in paper, letterhead design, or typography, it should not thrust itself on the reader's attention. Moreover, all color elements on the letter page should harmonize with each other and contribute to a perfect whole.

Enclosures. Instead of advertising on the letter sheet, the firm may elect to use enclosures of one kind or another. Any of these devices may help to keep the letter within the generally desirable one-page limit, yet provide for detailed description and explanation to be included in the attempt to "fill up the reader's cup of appreciation until it overflows into desire."

CHAPTER VI

SETTING UP THE LETTER

Framing the Picture. If we regard the margins of the letter page as the frame for the typewritten letter, it would seem that we should do all that we can to make them appear like a frame. This conception consistently leads to the use of the block form of letter arrangement.

Unmodified Block Form. Unmodified, as in Figure 3, shown below, it is sometimes used by firms who value it either for its efficiency, or novelty. It surely has both. Its efficiency comes from the saving of time it effects in determining the starting point for the various parts of the letter which in this form are all aligned with the left-hand margin. Its novelty, which makes it attractive to one person, probably is the very thing that forbids its use to another who follows tradition more faithfully.

Modified Block Form. But if one values a more dignified and conservative effect than that which such an uncompromising lay-out produces, he may modify the block form, more or less. He may change it considerably by moving over to the right-hand margin the date line, the complimentary closing and the signature; and also by indenting the paragraph margins five or ten spaces. This degree of modification is shown in Figure 5 and in many of the letters given in this book.

Nevertheless, many concerns prefer to cling closer to the block form than we have just indicated. This form is one that saves the typist a good deal of time; and, on the single-spaced letter, it indicates the divisions of the letter text perfectly, since each paragraph is separated from the next by double-spacing.



FIGURE 3. UNMODIFIED BLOCK FORM OF LETTER

The letter below is an excellent illustration of the block form, as it is commonly modified in the interests of balance and conservative usage:

December 1, 1928.

Dallas School of Commerce, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Attention Marion G. Fottler

Dear Madam:

We are at present using, and have used for a period of ten years, the socalled block system of letter set-up for practically all of our correspondence.

We are, however, using an indented set-up on form letters sent to our salesmen in the field. The reason for using the indented set-up in letters of this kind is that it seems a little less formal, and also because we wanted these letters not to follow the standard style of other letters which these representatives would receive from the factory.

We have never issued correspondence bulletins or manuals, and therefore cannot supply you with copies. We suggest that you get in touch with the American Rolling Mills Company at Middletown, Ohio, as we are sure that they will be able to give you quite a little information relative to correspondence. That company has taken a very active interest in improvement of correspondence and has had a special department handling this work for a period of perhaps four or five years.

We are very sorry that we cannot be of more help to you.

Sincerely yours, A. B. Alison



JOHN B. STETSON COMPANY

PHILADELPHIA

J ROWELL CHAMINGS SESSIONY
FRANK S RICHARDS VISE PRODUCT
MILTON D SENSE, VICE PRESIDENT
GEORGE V MACKINON OF SEPENDENT
WO DATTON SHELLY PRESIDENT
GEORGE L. RUBSELL, IV. A. AND A PORRELIES
WH N SCHNEIDER SESSIONAL SESSION
MEN SCHNEIDER SESSIONAL SESSIONAL
MOUPEL CHAMINGS AS ARRESTMENT
MEN SCHNEIDER SESSIONAL SESSION

December 16, 1926.

Marion G. Fottler, Dallas, Texas.

Dear Madam:

We have your communication of December 10, and while it is true that we are interested in the subject of correct business correspondence, we have never prepared any matter on the subject in the way of correspondence bulletins or manuals, and for that reason we regret it is not possible for us to comply with your suggestion.

Yours very truly,

John B. Stetson Company,

cretary.

WHS:C

FIGURE 4. MODIFIED BLOCK FORM OF LETTER

The Indented Form. One of the older, more informal setups of the letter page is known as the indented form. The next letter, and the one given in Figure 5, show the letter page so arranged.

September 13, 1929.

Mr. A. B. Smith 10 Lincoln Street New Bedford, Mass.

Gentlemen:

We were sitting in the advertising office of a department store the other day when the "boss" came rushing in with a small 2 column by 15 inch ad which had been published in the evening paper by his competitor.

"Look at this ad," he said to his advertising man—"see how these cuts stand out; see how the merchandise is illustrated—just makes a fellow feel like going there and buying what they advertise.

"Here I am, paying out a lot of money for big space and this fellow comes out with a little 2×15 ad that simply 'knocks the socks off' of our big half page ad when it comes right down to Getting the Business."

Touching the "boss" on the arm, I reminded him of our long experience in solving the retail merchant's problems and that probably I could be of some service to him.

We took the competitor's 2 x 15 ad and examined it. There were six items—three of which were illustrated with small, clean cut, well merchandised illustrations that told a true story about the Goods Advertised and gave life to the other three items which were not illustrated. The ad was small, but it stuck out like a "sore thumb."

This is the Secret of advertising. It is not big space. It is not a big cut of a pretty picture. You are not running a picture gallery—you are selling merchandise. Use less space and sell more merchandise. If others are doing it, so can you. If by the use of this Service other stores are making an increase as high as seventy percent, so can you.

Send back the card today.

Yours truly,

CHARLES WHITE

INSURANCE EXCHANGE CORPORATION LIMITED 190 ST JAMES STREET MONTREAL

October 26, 1924

Mr. Letter Writer,

76 Any Street,

Allover, Canada.

Dear Sir:

A point that many people overlook in selecting the design for a letter heading is that it should be judged in connection with the letter when typednot isolated on a plain sheet. The only thing that really matters is the effect produced on the mind of the man who receives the letter.

And the nester the heading, the more the stock shows. Therefore, the better must be the paper.

Yours faithfully,
THE ROLLAND PAPER CO., LIMITED,

Advertising Manager.

R.H.Ecolestone. M.E.D.

FIGURE 5. INDENTED FORM OF LETTER

· Novel Set-Ups. As opposed to the conservative element in business there is the man whose personality seems to demand what he calls "originality" or "novelty."

Often the effect is so attention-getting that the message goes almost unheeded. Sometimes the attention so attracted is not favorable. Yet I should certainly agree with any one who might claim that all novel arrangements are not necessarily freakish. The following letter is certainly not. Yet in the long run, the conservative arrangement is the one that most merits approval, if for no other reason than that it does not detract attention from the letter message by focusing the eye upon itself.

DIDN'T YOU FIND THE NEW BOOK INTERESTING?

"The 7 Keys to Attention Getting," the book you requested, was sent you about two weeks ago. This book is more than the ordinary generalization. It offers you seven specific ways to get Attention for your advertising.

ONE CHAP WROTE US-

"The easiest way I found to bring advertising returns was to follow the SIMPLICITY formula demonstrated in your '7 Keys Book'—It is easy—It is effective."

How WE MIGHT HELP YOU

Make your next "dummy" letterhead, enclosure, folder, booklet, on a Strathmore paper. See how expressive it is without a bit of type, or color, or decoration. A pictureful background for your advertising message.

Ask your Strathmore agent to furnish you with samples of these papers. They get attention for you quietly, directly, convincingly.

Or, if we can help you in any of your advertising mailings, we up here at "Strathmore Town" shall be mighty glad to serve you.

Yours for profitable advertising,

The Heading. If the letterhead is well designed it gives the name of the concern, its place of business and other details of address, so that the only thing that remains to be typed in the heading is the date. The date line gives an opportunity for novel arrangement as shown in the letters reproduced in this book, but the conservative form demands that the name of the month be written out in full, followed by the day of month separated by a comma from the year, as: January 9, 1928.

The Date. Do not use a figure to express the month; that is, do not write 5 for May (5/28/28). Do not use the letters nd, st, rd, and th after the figure which indicates the day of the month unless the figure precedes the day of the month.

Right .
June 3, 1928
4th of July

Wrong June 3rd, 1928

The Inside Address. The inside address should be accurately typewritten at least three spaces below the date line. Its starting point determines the left-hand margin. It should occupy two or three lines, giving the name of the addressee, with his proper title, and the exact address to which the letter is to be sent.

Fine discrimination demands care and good taste in the use of titles.

The name of the firm may be preceded by *The* when it is an impersonal name and part of the firm signature as: *The Woodward Company*, or by *Messrs*. (from the French *messieurs*, meaning *gentlemen*) when the firm name actually signifies individuals.

Messrs. Crawford, Bellingham and Lawton (a firm of lawyers).

Messrs. Dallon and Frost (a firm of Certified Public Accountants).

Messrs. Bridges, Locke and Potter (a firm of architects).

On the following page are tabulated the more common titles and what they signify.

Miss for an unmarried woman: Miss Bertha Clark.

Misses for two or more unmarried women: The Misses Rogers.

Mrs. for a married woman: Mrs. Albert Freeman.

Mesdames for two or more married women: Mesdames Kay and Dorr.

Mr. for a man: Mr. Oscar Nelson.

Messrs. for two or more men: Messrs. Fellows, Roy & Carr.

The professional titles should be applied with discrimination: the title of *Doctor* (*Dr.*) belongs equally to all who have attained to their doctorate in any field as: medicine, dentistry, science, or philosophy: *Dr. Josiah Royce; Dr. Richard Cabot. Doctor* should be written in full if the surname alone follows it: *Doctor Williams*.

Avoid the title *Esq.* (for *esquire*) in addressing the American business man.

Titles indicating a man's business position as Superintendent, Treasurer, Manager, etc., are preferably written in full after the name, preceded by a title of courtesy:

Mr. Allen J. Marsh, Treasurer Fifth National Bank Boston, Massachusetts

Dr. Arthur Gerald Lane, Secretary Southwest Association of Medical Arts Dallas, Texas

Other titles commonly used in the inside address are: *Prof.* for *Professor*; *Hon.* for certain government officials, or prominent public citizens and *The Rev.* or *Rev.* for the clergy.

The abbreviation for in care of (c/o), should be used only when the mail is actually to be entrusted to the concern named.

When a street address is given, the words Street and Avenue rarely should be abbreviated. The street number should not be preceded by the sign (#) nor by the abbreviation (No.) for number. When the name of a street is an ordinal number, the word should be written in full up to Twelfth: Fifth Avenue; after which point the name may be expressed in figures, especially if it is long: 125th Street.

The name of the city should be separated from that of the state by a comma, as: Dayton, Ohio. It is decidedly incorrect to abbreviate the name of the city, as Phila. for Philadelphia, and it is preferable to write the name of the state in full. If the name of the state is abbreviated, the abbreviated forms prescribed by the U. S. postal authorities should be used: Colo. (for Colorado), Mo. (for Missouri).

The Salutation. The salutation should be placed at the left-hand margin, two spaces below the last line of the inside address. It should be followed by a colon: My dear Mrs. Astor:

The salutation to a corporation or group of men, or group of men and women, should be, Gentlemen. Although Dear Sirs has had until recently very good standing, it is now becoming obsolete. If the group addressed is composed of women, Mesdames is the courteous salutation. To use a person's name in the salutation, as Dear Mr. Wilder, implies previous acquaintance and intensifies the effect that the letter is a personal one. The traditional decree that the name should be used in the salutation, as: Dear Mr. Brown, only when previous acquaintance has existed, is not always strictly observed; yet it is well to be conservative in the use of this form.

The following examples show a variety of good set-ups for the inside address and appropriate forms of salutation for each:

Mr. Robert K. Black, Manager The Holland-Maynard Company Kansas City, Missouri

Dear Sir:

Dr. Oliver Kennedy, Chairman The Committee of Ways and Means Rotary Club Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Kennedy:

The Right Reverend William H. O'Connell D. D. Bishop of Massachusetts

My Lord Bishop: (or)
Right Reverend dear Bishop:

Mr. Arthur J. Flagg, Superintendent Briston Iron Works Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Mr. Flagg:

Messrs. Pratt, Keenan & Fenton 112 Main Street Detroit, Michigan

Attention of Mr. Albee

Gentlemen:

It is highly desirable to keep in mind the varying degrees of formality signified by the usual business salutations:

Sir: used only in governmental communications or to the editor of a periodical.

My dear Sir: most formal.

Dear Sir: formal.

Dear Mr. Brown: My dear Mr. Brown: informal; yet possible to use where personal acquaintance exists or can be assumed.

Dear Fred: Dear Atkins: very friendly.

Never omit the salutation, except in the impersonal duplicated letter, but even there it is customary to fill, in some novel style, the space which the salutation ordinarily occupies.

June 1929

AND NOW COMES JUNE—

The Body of the Letter. The body of the letter may start two spaces below the salutation, generally from five to ten

spaces in from the left-hand margin. Succeeding paragraphs should maintain the paragraph margin used in the first. A double space should separate paragraphs from each other.

The Complimentary Close. The complimentary close is usually placed two spaces below and slightly to the right of the middle of the last line of the body of the letter. It consists of a more or less perfunctory expression of courtesy. Some firms, however, utilize the closing as an opportunity to get novelty, and at the same time give this expression some actual significance to the reader:

Yours for better paint protection, Yours for yellow pine,

The conventional complimentary closings, which in their variations are used by almost all business men, are given below:

Yours truly, is the perfunctory closing, corresponding in formality to Dear Sir:

Yours sincerely, denotes somewhat more warmth and friendliness. It is recommended for almost any business letter.

Yours cordially, is intended to be a friendly closing. It should be used with discrimination.

Respectfully, is used only in governmental communications. Yours respectfully, is a closing meant to convey great respect.

The Signature. The signature is placed under the complimentary closing, and governs the point of starting the closing more than anything else does. The man who signs needs enough room to write his name so that it will end somewhat even with the inner edge of the right-hand margin. If the signer has a long name, or if he writes a large hand, he obviously needs more room than otherwise. The stenographer should adapt herself to the occasion.

Above all, the signature should be legible. If it is strong so much the better, for a signature reveals to the canny eye much about the man who penned it. Perhaps more than anything else on the letter page, the signature represents the writer. It should not be scrawled, affected nor out of proportion to the rest of the page. It should be written with good ink, conventionally black or blue-black.

The rubber stamped signature is practically taboo for any personal letter. However, the circular letter, issued in thousands of copies, offers sufficient excuse for employing mechanical means of reproducing the signature, either on the duplicating machine, or by some other expeditious method.

To insure perfect legibility, the name may be typewritten; and sometimes the legal name of the concern and other firm name data are also typed:

Sales Manager

Stenographic Data. The initials or name of the dictator and the initials of the stenographer should be placed even with the left-hand margin in some such manner as this:

MAR*JKL (or) Wm. G. Pace/GT

Enclosures. Enclosures are indicated by *Enc.* placed directly beneath the stenographic data. This notation is useful in reminding the letter-writer to put enclosures in the letter, as well as giving the recipient a convenient device with which to check up enclosures:

L. C. Stone - J.C. 2 Encls.

Postscripts. The postscript (P.S.) is placed below all other typing. It may contain a message incidental to the

subject of the letter, such as personal greetings; or it may give expression to some pithy suggestion that is designed to get especial emphasis through its advantageous position. If the writer is tempted to use the postscript to carry some essential thought which he has overlooked in the letter, generally he ought to rewrite the letter so as to embody the thought in question, rather than tack it on at the end.

- P.S. If you hold any of the bonds listed within, send in your coupons; they will be cashed at once.
- P.S. If there's anything else you'll need for the new building—rugs, window shades, office furniture—I'd be only too glad to help you select it.

Besides the letter sheet, there is the envelope to be considered.

Envelope sizes are as follows:

#6	33/8 x 6goes	inside #63/4
#63/4	$3\frac{5}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ used for ordinary co	rrespondence
#9	37/8 x 87/8	official
#10	$4\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2} \dots \dots$	official
#11	$4\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{3}{8}$ for leg	al documents

Folding and Inserting. When the envelope is small the letter sheet is folded in halves crosswise; and then folded again in thirds so as to go into the envelope. If the envelope is large—say, the #10 size—it is proper to fold it in thirds crosswise. Any letter should be inserted in such a way that when it is opened it will appear right side up, ready to read in the addressee's hands.

Corner Card. The few words printed in the upper lefthand corner of the envelope identify the sender, and also specify the number of days that the letter is to be held for delivery before it is returned to the sender: After 5 days return to A. B. Ellis 44 Main Street St. Louis, Mo.

If the letter is delivered, the corner card creates one of the first impressions—favorable or unfavorable—upon the person who opens the envelope.

The Envelope. The superscription on the envelope should be simple; hence easy to read and comprehend; and correct and sufficiently full to allow delivery without directory service. The name and title should be placed on the first line, the street and number on the second, and the city and state on the third:

Miss Anna G. Fulton 12 Forest Avenue Springfield, Massachusetts

The Brownell Company 15 East 26th Street New York, New York

The importance of putting on the street address cannot be overemphasized. The rapid growth of cities and the number of changes made, make it impossible for postal clerks to memorize street addresses in any very large city. Mail which requires directory service is delayed in delivery; moreover, about half of the mail sent to the General Post Office is undeliverable even by experts. A delayed letter may cost an order; and a lost letter, a customer.

End Punctuation. End punctuation is commonly omitted, since the items are separated from each other by arrangement. Many business men, however, insist on using punctuation. If commas are used, they are placed at the end of all lines except the last, and between the name of the city and that of the state. A period is sometimes placed at the end of the last line.

Messrs. Georges and Evans, 12 Summer Street, Boston, Massachusetts. Marked "Personal." Generally, it is well to avoid sending personal mail to business addresses, but whenever the message is meant to reach the eye of the addressee only, it should be marked *Personal*.

Miss A. L. MacDonald Belmont Auto Company Paterson, New Jersey

Personal

CHAPTER VII

POINTS IN GOOD TYPING

In glancing at the letter page, the eye must be satisfied. It must rest on a well-balanced page. The letter should have a margin of from one to two inches wide on both sides—right and left; and should be far enough down from the letterhead, considering its mass, to appear properly centered.

Judging the Length. By observing the length of the letter in shorthand, the experienced stenographer can judge in advance fairly accurately how long the typed letter will be. When the length of the letter will not permit its being placed on one page, not less than four or five lines besides the closing should be carried over to the second page. To carry over less makes the second page look undignified. If it happens that, owing to poor judgment, only one or two lines remain to be placed on the second sheet, the letter should generally be retyped on one sheet using somewhat narrower margins. If such a plan is not practicable, the retyped letter should have wider margins and run over more on the second sheet.

At the top of the second sheet some notation should be made to indicate the addressee, the date, and the number of the page, as: Mr. Allen -2 - 7/29/29. or A. B. Cooke -2 - July 1, 1928.

Spacing. The letter may be either single- or double-spaced. Double-spacing, as shown in Figure 4, is more legible to be sure, and possibly suitable for the very short letter. Even so, it always gives a spread out effect in contrast to the compactly massed, single-spaced message which stands out against the white border.

Need of Good Tools for the Typist. Let us assume that the typist has before her an artistic letterhead of a good quality on which to type the letter. She requires good tools with which to do her job. Most essential of all is an up-to-date typewriter, in good repair and properly cleaned; secondly, a fresh eraser with which to make the few changes that are needed, not because one is careless, but human; third, carbon paper of good quality and weight, kept unwrinkled; fourth, by preference, a black record typewriter ribbon.

If the tools are all right then the performance of the stenographer's task is squarely up to her. She has a definite responsibility for turning out a letter which adequately represents the standards of excellence maintained by her concern. Let her avoid all the defects which may mar the typewritten page, and strive to produce, by an even touch, work that is uniform in tone.

Points to Check. Why not check up the letters that go out from your office, to see if "Someone" there takes pride in her work. One may well ask:

Is the touch even or are the A's and L's light?
Are some letters blurred, showing that the type is dirty?
Are the punctuation marks so heavy that they nearly cut

through the paper?

Is the spacing after punctuation points indiscriminate? Is the ribbon so worn that the typing is faint?

Are there strike-overs?

Is the page smudged from soiled fingers?

Is the line spacing uneven?

Are the margins ragged?

Are there skipped letter spaces?

If so, some business man is paying for something he is not getting—typewriting efficiency, and some stenographer is taking chances on getting fired. Check up!

The letter that follows comes from a letter shop. The central idea is brought out in its novel closing: Yours for attractive letters:

Dear Sir:

From your experience in advertising you know how to plan and create a good sales letter that contains the necessary punch to pull results.

You also know that first impressions go a tremendously long way toward closing the sale, and unless your sales letter is a piece of meticulous neatness and inviting to read, then it is like an unwashed plate glass window. Your prospect won't look through the "unwashed glass" of a shabby, unkempt letter. Without even giving what you have to say any consideration at all, he tosses it into that pesky little thing called the waste basket.

For the last twenty years we have turned out neatly finished letters, and we live up to these bywords—Promptness—Accuracy—Trustworthiness. We have modern equipment and an experienced personnel for multigraphing, addressing, and letter service.

After you have finished creating and writing your next direct-mail sales letter, turn it over to us, and we will put a prepossessing "personality" around your well-written letter. Then it will be given due consideration upon first appearance because of that personality and attractiveness.

The plate glass window will be so clean, clear, and shining that your reader and potential buyer will look right into the selling argument minus all obstacles.

Yours for attractive letters,

Spacing After Punctuation Marks. There are a few other matters that have to do strictly with the typing itself. One is the spacing after punctuation points. Incorrect spacing reveals, generally, the amateur typist. This is the correct practice in a nutshell: leave one space after punctuation points that occur in the middle, and two after those that occur at the end of the sentence. Thus in the first sentences of this paragraph, two spaces would be left after the periods following itself, points, sentence, and typist; but one only is left after the colon following nutshell and after the commas following middle, reveals, and generally.

Mechanical Emphasis. Another typing problem centers around the question of how to give special prominence to some particular idea. Generally, the dictator should insure a forceful style by employing effective language rather than expect the typist to give force to his letter by the use of red ink, italics, and capitals.

However, there are some occasions when the spirit of the message may be properly supported and intensified by the devices mentioned in the following letter, which discusses mechanical emphasis interestingly and fairly. (In the original, the lines here printed in italics are typed in red ink.)

An Illustrated Letter in Black with Red Ink For emphasis

A LETTER printed from Typewriter Type

Dear Sir:

To put emphasis on any phrase, title, heading or picture is not difficult.

The difficult feat is to use emphasis with discrimination.

The use of contrasting colors, large and small sizes of type, italics with Roman letters, bold face type in conjunction with faces that are gray in tone, or the use of big pictures in contrast with smaller ones, will give the necessary differences in value that furnish emphasis.

Emphasis on too many items, though, results in confusion.

The use of a few lines in red in a letter printed in black, for instance, is usually as much as one page can stand.

Such usage makes a pleasing yet forceful contrast on Warren's Library Text.

This page was printed from typewriter type at the same time as the text and halftones.

Yours very truly,

Underscoring for Emphasis. The following letter effectively brings out three sales points by underscoring:

Dear Sir:

Here's a great opportunity for the man who wants a genuine bargain in a bookkeeping machine.

It's a guaranteed Used Burroughs Automatic Bookkeeping Machine equipped with the new Burroughs Direct Proof of Posting feature—a machine which furnishes a positive proof of each posting as it is made!

This machine posts ledgers, writes customers' statements, and besides does all the miscellaneous figuring work that a straight adding machine will do. Samples of work done on this machine are shown on the inside of this folder.

If desired, the machine will post the ledger and write the customer's statement at the same time.

It has been completely overhauled by the Burroughs Company. All worn parts have been replaced with new Burroughs parts, and it is guaranteed the same as a new machine.

Why not let us demonstrate and explain our easy-payment plan? Mail the postcard now! You will be under no obligation, and our salesman may be able to give you some valuable information.

Very truly yours,

Use of Capitals. Capitalization is very much overdone in business writing. Many business men are so impressed with the need of bringing out a word that they practically insist upon capitalizing it. Such practice is not justified. Following is a list of occasions for using the capital letters. It includes practically all the uses that occur in business.

Capitalize:

- 1. The first word in the sentence.
- 2. Proper names in general: France, Woodrow Wilson, the Bible. (These do not include the names of seasons nor the sections of the country; except when they are referred to especially: The East is our chief market. Here the road turned east.)
- 3. The important words in the title of a book or magazine as:

 Manual for Dictators and Stenographers.
- 4. Most adjectives derived from proper nouns, as: British subject.
- 5. All titles of respect whether they are used in place of names or followed by it, as: The Mayor introduced President Ordway.
- 6. The pronoun I and exclamation O.

Underscoring for Other Purposes. Italics are indicated in typewriting by underscoring. As already noted, this device may be used to express especial emphasis. But it is also used for titles of books and names of ships (which many typists incorrectly enclose in quotation marks).

Business English and Commercial Correspondence, by Davis & Lingham

The Magazine of Business

The Wanderer (an old whaling vessel)

CHAPTER VIII

SPELLING CORRECTLY

English Spelling Difficult. Undoubtedly Bulwer-Lytton spoke for more than himself when he voiced his exasperation at the irregularity of English spelling: "It is impossible to find a more lying, roundabout, puzzle-headed delusion concocted by the father of falsehood than that with which we confuse the clear instincts of truth as our accursed system of spelling."

Yet while we may feel sorry for ourselves, that does not help us out of our difficulties. In some quarters there is a good deal of talk about spelling reform but there are more than a few obstacles in the way of effecting such a change all at once. Altogether it would appear that we must face English spelling as it is. Fortunately, the task for the correspondent is not an utterly impossible one.

Correctness Imperative and Possible. Although it is probably impossible to know how to spell every unusual, difficult word, the ability to write all common routine words correctly has been acquired by many business correspondents. Thus it comes about that the letter in which misspelled words are found brands its dictator and its typist as ignorant or careless, or both; for correct spelling can be learned by a person who has enough intelligence to write otherwise acceptable business letters.

If one cannot "figure out" why *supersede* is spelled with an s instead of a c, why can't he remember it? If he never knows whether to write *correspondence* or *correspondents*, why not learn that the one ending with ce refers to letters; then he'll be like the little boy who begged his grandmother to tell him which

shoe went on his right foot—he'll "have no trouble with the other."

The correspondent may be helped by knowing three or four causes why some of us are "wretched spellers."

Careful Pronunciation a Help. He should realize that much poor spelling is the result of slovenly pronunciation with a tendency toward blurred vocal enunciation both of vowels and consonants. Does one incorrectly say maintain'ance? Then I'll wager he does not write maintenance. Does he say gov'ment and atheletics when he talks? If so, he reduces the likelihood of his spelling these words correctly—government, athletics.

Careful Eye-Habits in Reading. Secondly, he should be aware that some poor spelling comes about from failure to observe the printed word in reading.

Since much spelling is illogical and most of the rules have numerous exceptions, the good speller is found to be the person who has read widely and observantly until he has acquired the habit of actually noticing the spelling of unfamiliar words. We write words as we remember seeing them in books, where they stand forth clearly. When we come across an unfamiliar word, we should pause long enough to get a definite picture which we can carry away with us. If we do thus observe words, it follows that, since we read a larger number of words than we use in speaking or writing, we shall pretty certainly be ready to write correctly any word whose meaning and use we understand.

Current Fashions of "Simplified Spelling" Often a Hindrance. Thirdly, poor spelling is encouraged by the use of so much simplified spelling in recent years. Disregarding the pros and cons of simplified spelling, it is very apparent that two forms for any one word tend to blur the mental image of that word. We should be sure which spelling is authorized.

Trade names, as we all know, are often spelled to suggest the ideas conveyed by some ordinary word. *Naborhood, Sta-so, Uneeda, Takhoma,* are a few such words.

Preferred American Spelling. The spelling of the business letter must be correct; where usage varies, the form chosen should represent the preferred American spelling. When the spelling of a word is doubtful to the letter-writer he should, of course, consult a good dictionary, which he should have conveniently at hand. It is not sufficient, however, that a form be found in the dictionary because many unauthorized forms are listed therein; the writer should notice which form is to be preferred.

If, for instance, he consults the dictionary to see which is to be preferred, develop or develope, he finds that the first form is preferred, but that the second is given as a variant—an optional form. Provable and proveable, judgment and judgement fall in the same class. If he looks up proved—proven, he finds that proven is out-of-date (obsolete); therefore he should choose proved invariably. If he questions although—altho, he sees that altho is a simplified form which after a while may become authorized, but which, strictly speaking, at this time is not authorized.

One thing more—if he takes the trouble to look a word up, it should be in a reliable, fairly large dictionary.

The Best Dictionaries. The best dictionaries for the correspondent's use are Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Webster's Secondary School Dictionary, Funk & Wagnalls' College Standard Dictionary, Funk & Wagnalls' Standard Dictionary, New Winston Dictionary, and Oxford Concise Dictionary.

There are several convenient handbooks to supplement the dictionary; in fact, there is little or no excuse for the business writer's shielding his poor spelling behind the plea that English language is too irregular in its spelling to afford a standard worth learning.

Most poor spellers would reduce their difficulties by making a list of the words which they individually misspell. Every time such a person consults the dictionary he should add the word in question to his list, being very careful to see that it is spelled correctly, and divided into syllables properly. The accent should be indicated correctly, and the pronunciation mastered. Many writers will find that the words which they habitually misspell will number not more than twenty or thirty.

Words Often Misspelled. When these have been thoroughly mastered, other lists, compiled by experts, covering the words commonly misspelled in business and elsewhere, may be studied. It is well to concentrate on a few at a time.

The following list includes many of the words relating to business which are most often misspelled.

disappoint parallel accept acknowledge dispatch personnel advisable dissatisfied principal all right divide principle allege effect privilege already eighth proceed alter embarrass professor application enclose promissory appreciate especially really arrangement exaggerate receipt article excel. recommend ascent February reference athletic foreign respectfully beginning fulfil salary belief laboratory separate bookkeeper length sincerely breadth library their catalog lose. together clientele mathematics traveler committee mercantile tying conscientious moneys, monies waiver convenient necessary cooperate oblige Wednesday course occur withhold

A Few Rules. In addition to learning certain particularly difficult words, the correspondent should take the trouble to learn certain rules which are applied consistently enough to be very helpful in determining troublesome letter arrangements.

It is interesting to note that Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, coming at a time when our language was passing through one of its great transitions, accounts for the hasty crystallization of many forms which otherwise eventually would have been found unworthy of survival.

Following are some rules for forming the plurals of nouns. They have many exceptions, because English is spelled according to tradition rather than rule; but if we seek to apply these rules as principles rather than as to be followed without fail, we shall find them serviceable.

Plurals of Nouns. Most nouns add s or es to form the plural.

box, boxes business, businesses chintz, chintzes church, churches desk, desks

Nouns Ending in y. Nouns ending in y preceded by a consonant (or by u when it is pronounced as w) form the plural by changing the y to i and adding es:

lady, ladies soliloquy, soliloquies

Note: Other nouns ending in y form their plurals regularly.

Nouns Ending in o. Nouns ending in o form the plural by adding either s or es. The nouns which have been in the language a long time generally add es:

cargo, cargoes tomato, tomatoes

but the newer nouns ending in o, particularly those borrowed from the Italian add s only:

piano, pianos zero, zeros

Nouns Ending in f or fe. Nouns ending in f or fe, except as follows, form the plural by adding s:

beef, beeves
calf, calves
loaf, loaves
elf, elves
self, selves
half, halves
knife, knives
leaf, leaves

beef, beeves
self, selves
shelf, shelves
wharf, wharves (or wharfs)
wife, wives
wolf, wolves

Compound Nouns. Compound nouns usually form the plural by adding s or es to the principal part of the word:

bill-of-fare, bills-of-fare commander-in-chief, commanders-in-chief daughter-in-taw, daughters-in-law

Plurals of Letters, Signs and Figures. Letters, signs and sometimes figures add 's to form the plural: a's, &'s, 2's.

The Old Declension. A few nouns adhere to old declensions:

brother, brethren child, children ox, oxen

Irregular Plurals. Some nouns form the plural irregularly:

foot, feet goose, geese man, men mouse, mice woman, women Singulars and Plurals Alike. Some nouns have the same form in the plural as they have in the singular: deer, fish, sheep. Some nouns are always in the plural: scissors; riches.

Singular Nouns Ending in s. Some nouns, although plural in form, are singular in meaning: athletics, news, means.

Foreign Plurals. Foreign nouns may retain the foreign plural:

alumna
alumnus
analysis
appendix
bacterium
crisis
datum
erratum

focus formula hypothesis

memorandum nucleus parenthesis phenomenon radius

stratum

alumnae alumni analyses

appendices or appendixes

bacteria crises data errata foci

formulae or formulas

hypotheses memoranda nuclei • parentheses phenomena radii strata

A Test in Spelling. Have some one dictate to you the following list of words which have proved too difficult for some very good spellers:

auxiliary
avoirdupois
collectible
connoiseur
dismissal
embarrass
inflammable
innuendo
inoculate
kimono

mayonnaise naphtha paraphernalia questionnaire rarefy remittance repellent subpoena supersede tranquillity

CHAPTER IX

PUNCTUATING INTELLIGENTLY

The Purpose of Punctuation, to Show Relations and Emphasis. The term punctuation may be taken in two senses. In its broad sense it is made to include not only the commonly used punctuation marks, but also any other device, like paragraph form and the various sizes and styles of type, by which the printer gives emphasis and force to the written word.

The letter on the opposite page illustrates the extent to which the set-up of the letter can be made, broadly speaking, to punctuate it. Note that the effect desired is obtained by dividing the text in accordance with its structure; by choosing words wisely; and by arranging the outline attractively.

The Ordinary Punctuation Marks. Not forgetting that punctuation is a kind of emphasis, we shall confine our consideration of it to the ordinary points: comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), dash (—), parentheses (()), quotation marks (""), brackets ([]), apostrophe ('), exclamation point (!), interrogation point (?), and period (.).

Old books printed in English show that in early times there was practically no punctuation. Later, as such marks were seen to aid the eye in grasping easily and intelligently the writer's precise meaning, they came into general use; but they were used according to whim or fancy rather than according to rule. Long-winded discourse encouraged the lavish use of these points. Now the pendulum has swung the other way, so that today, especially in business letters, comparatively few marks are called for. Those few, however, should be used with thought and discrimination. Clearness is aided by a direct and simple sentence structure.

For teachers and officers of universities and colleges:

The Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America,

Like other good insurance companies, is incorporated regularly, supervised by the New York State Insurance Department, has expert actuarial and financial guidance, provides standard types of policies, maintains full legal reserves against all contracts, and has reduced its guaranteed rates by substantial dividends.

Unlike other companies, it
provides policies especially suited to teachers,
not to be had elsewhere,
furnishes its contracts at net cost,
meets all expense of carrying on the business
from the income of capital and surplus
given for that purpose;
has no agents,
has trustees nominated by the policyholders, and

has been investigated and approved
by the faculties and trustees
of a hundred universities and colleges
which contribute toward annuity contracts.

Three thousand officers and teachers in four hundred universities and colleges have found these contracts especially adapted to their specific needs, at a cost from fifteen to forty per cent less than those of other companies.

May not the Association inform you of the large advantages and the small cost of these contracts for your personal welfare and the protection of your family?

John Jones Actuary However, the business writer should take the trouble to learn the common meaning of each of the ordinary punctuation points. If he owns a good style book, or, better still, for this particular purpose, a manual of punctuation, such as *The Stevens Handbook of Punctuation* (The Century Co.), he may learn how to punctuate almost any construction that he may have to consider. It is a mistake to think that punctuation is governed by a set of hard-and-fast rules. On the contrary, it is governed to a considerable extent by the meaning of the writer.

Nevertheless, authorities agree on the essentials which are set forth briefly in this chapter.

Responsibility of Writer and Typist. The business writer should not forget that if he fails to punctuate properly—that is, intelligently—his writing will suggest either that he is not logical or that he is indifferent to his reader's convenience. At any rate, he is exacting from his readers an unwarranted expenditure of time and effort in order to understand the letter.

The typist who is not willing to cooperate in expressing the dictator's meaning and personality is seriously shirking her responsibilities. The rules for business punctuation should not be very difficult for the average stenographer to learn, yet few young women take the trouble to inform themselves even on the everyday uses, to say nothing about the more unusual situations that arise. If the typist consults a good handbook whenever she is in doubt, and has, besides, a good knowledge of ordinary usage, it will not be impossible for her to become that most appreciated of transcribers: one who can decide intelligently what mark ought to be used.

A Test. The following letter text is devoid of punctuation points, yet nearly all of them are needed to make the meaning clear. Perhaps you will be interested to supply the proper marks:

our friends bland & company tell us that theyve just made you a shipment of armstrongs linoleum its good to know that linoleum is moving well in your store and we hope that youve found your sales are going right ahead

theres an old maxim in the grocery trade the profits in the last can more and more merchants who sell linoleum phrase it in a new way theres profit in the extra can they try to see that an extra can goes out with each linoleum sale a can of armstrongs wax for inlaid linoleum armstrongs varnish for printed linoleum perhaps a can of approved soap or liquid cleaner

these convenient sundries do not take up much space in the linoleum department if you have never handled them before why not talk it over with the jobbers salesman the next time he calls and place an initial order

by the way youll want to be on the lookout for your jobbers representative hell be around with next years line of armstrongs linoleum soon after december 1st and its worth waiting for there are new developments in linoleum making this year youll want to be up on them sincerely

The Comma. The comma is used in general to indicate a slight separation in thought. It has five particular uses:

1. The comma is used to separate the non-restrictive clauses or phrases of a sentence when they are joined by and, but, or or:

The old year passes, but leaves us with valued memories of mutual good-will and friendship on which to build the new year.

A semicolon rather than a comma, is correct if the conjunction is omitted.

Tontine is also extremely durable. It will not crack; it will not pinhole; it will not fray at the edges.

One of the good things about selling Mennen goods is that you don't have to worry about the demand; you know that year in and out they sell as steady as a clock.

2. The comma is used to separate interrupting (or parenthetical) elements from the rest of the sentence. These elements include direct address, explanation, appositives, mild interjections, and absolute phrases, as:

We regret very much, Mr. Harris, that our reply is not going to be just what you expect.

The Semicolon. A semicolon indicates a degree of separation in the thought, somewhat between that shown by the comma and by the period. At the same time that the semicolon separates elements which are not grammatically unified, it shows that in spite of the separation in structure there is an underlying logical relation.

Here is a contract in simple and easily understood language; providing the maximum Simon-Pure life insurance service on a permanent basis for the least premium.

All Ideal Outfits are of the highest type of efficiency, and give perfect results in comfort, fuel-economy, easy management, and convenience; besides, they last as long as the building.

The Colon. The colon is used as a formal introduction to a proposition or a series of illustrations, questions, or the like, as:

We quote on these products:

Benzoite of Soda, U. S. P., \$1.50 per pound Benzoit Acid, U. S. P., 1.75 per pound

You should visit Europe next summer. Never have England and the Continent been so interesting. To get the most out of the trip you ought to have:

Congenial companionship Freedom from all petty worries Complete understanding of places you visit.

You are sure of these three when you go with the Bureau of University Travel. Our patrons are people with whom you will enjoy traveling: cultivated, companionable, delightful.

In accordance with your instructions the caps of these razors are to be engraved as follows:

General Machinery Company Philadelphia, Pa. The Period. A period is used after an abbreviation, or to mark the end of a declarative or imperative sentence:

The market broke. (declarative)
Send for our catalog today. (imperative)

Since many letter-writers do not recognize a subordinate clause, they are likely to separate it from the rest of the sentence by a period, as:

WRONG: I want you to try this device. Although you are not yet ready to purchase.

RIGHT: I want you to try this device; although you are not yet ready to purchase.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that well-established condensed or elliptical expressions, which stand for sentences, like *Of course* and *Certainly*, are not allowable. Our written English is full of such ellipses. They are punctuated at the end as if they were sentences.

Would you like to add to your earning power? Of course.

The Question Mark. A question mark is placed after a direct question:

Can you suggest several of your students who would be interested to earn some extra money in their spare time selling Personal Christmas cards during the next two months?

but not after an indirect one:

We have been wondering if you can use these odd lots.

If it is used within the sentence, as it may be, it should not be followed by a comma, semicolon, or period:

"Why this deficiency?" you say.

The Exclamation Point. An exclamation point is placed after words or longer expressions to show strong emotion. It

should be used sparingly in business writing, where impassioned composition is more or less out of place. A comma instead, generally, even after interjections, gives enough emphasis.

Errors? Impossible!

The Psychological Moment

Dear Mr. Adams:

I've gone and done it! I'm a landowner now, a pillar of society. Bought a home—a real ten-room house with a piazza, a lawn, a garden, a garage, and a couple of trees thrown in.

The Apostrophe in Contraction. The apostrophe is used to indicate the omission of letters. It should appear where the letter has been omitted, not elsewhere. The contraction for have not is correctly written haven't (not hav'nt).

Wouldn't you like to use some of our printed literature with your imprint on it?

The cost is nominal and if you haven't a chart in operation by all means start one at your next meeting.

The Apostrophe to Show Possession. The use of the apostrophe to show possession puzzles many business writers; hence the following rules:

Add 's to a noun, singular or plural, that does not end in s to form the possessive:

This *merchant's* custom. These *men's* coats.

But where the possessive noun, singular or plural, does end in s, it is proper to add the apostrophe only, as: Jones' salary; although an extra syllable may be added, as Joneses', where the possessive plural is meant; as, all the Joneses' ancestors.

Add 's to form the plural of signs, letters, words, or numbers, when they are used without regard to meaning:

Your letter has several blemishes; the &'s should not be abbreviated; the a's and z's are blurred, and the you's should begin with small letters, not capitals.

It may be noted that the possessive form of the pronoun, his, hers, its, yours, theirs, and whose, does not require an apostrophe.

Quotation Marks. Quotation marks are used to enclose direct, but not indirect, quotations. Single quotation marks are used to indicate a direct quotation within a direct quotation.

The following illustrates the proper method of indicating a quotation within a quotation.

Mr. H. C. Lewis, President of the Coyne Electrical School at Chicago, says: "After very extensive tests we have found that personalized 'filled-in' form letters out-pull the conventional Dear friend' letters at least three to one. It's results that count. That's why we believe in Addressographed 'filled-in' letters."

Although quotation marks are generally used in pairs, if the quotation consists of two or more paragraphs it is good form to place the marks at the beginning of each paragraph of the quotation, but at the end of the last paragraph only.

Let me quote from our bulletin:

"There are at least four important points which determine whether or not a first mortgage bond is a good investment:

"1. The amount of first mortgage bonds should not exceed 60 per cent of the sound appraised value of the property. This appraisal should be checked by disinterested experienced

"2. Income from the property should cover maximum annual interest charges on the bond about two and one-half times

over.
"3. The property should be in a location where values are

advancing and not declining.

"4. The bond should be sold by a bank or bond house of high repute, so the property will have proper supervision and a market will be provided for the bonds."

Ouotation marks, as well as italics, are used to indicate titles. While italics are used for the titles of books, names of ships, etc., quotation marks are preferred to italics for the titles of periodical articles and chapter headings:

System 42:694-6 D. '22, "How We Cement Friendships With Our Every-Day Letters," Sherman Perry.

Ch. I, "What Advertising Is and Does." Ch. II, "Planning a Market Campaign."

Parentheses. Parentheses are used to enclose material which is not connected with the main thought of the sentence.

Since parenthetical expressions violate unity, one of the essentials of effective writing, parentheses should be used, if at all, very sparingly. They may, however, properly enclose figures which follow and confirm the written word:

He paid thirty dollars (\$30)

The Dash. The dash is sometimes properly used in place of parentheses:

That's a big order! But I've a floor that qualifies on every count—a floor I'd like to tell you more about—Armstrong's Linoleum, permanently laid by the superior modern method over a layer of deadening felt.

It is also properly used to show an abrupt ending of an unfinished sentence.

The following is the opening of a collection letter. The ending of the first paragraph is correctly punctuated by a dash.

Dear Sir:

We hope this letter is not following too close on the heels of ours of one week ago, but——

The very nature of our business requires fairly short terms. We sell largely labor, and labor is pretty generally a cash commodity.

The dash is often used indiscriminately by persons who are too lazy or illiterate to decide what the proper punctuation point should be. Avoid the tendency to use the dash lavishly as illustrated in the following:

Now—with much regret—we come to the point where we cannot keep on sending the magazine unless you tell us to. Your subscription is valuable to us; it would cost us some real money to replace it—so, will you accept our offer:

We also will be glad to present to you, without extra charge, a copy of any one of our \$2 books—listed on the bill enclosed.

You don't have to remit now—if your check book is not convenient. Just O.K. the bill enclosed—return it to us—subscription will continue—book will be mailed—and bill will be forwarded later.

The typist should express the dash by a hyphen preceded and followed by a space.

CHAPTER X

CHOICE OF WORDS FOR BUSINESS USES

New Words for New Ideas. As soon as some one gets a brand-new idea he must have a brand-new word for it. Whenever any of us learns a new fact, at the same time he acquires a new name by which to identify it. If a person is capable of thinking, and is alert to what is going on all around him, he has a larger stock of words at his command than another who is not so wide-awake. We who speak English have a larger number of words to choose from than any other language offers its users—almost half a million, in fact. Yet that does not mean that any of us either has or needs a tremendous word stock; far from it.

Our Four Vocabularies. We come in contact with language in four ways: we read it, listen to it, write it, and speak it. The words we are able to use in these four language activities may be called our four vocabularies. We use a varying number of words for each. In order of size, the four vocabularies stand:

- 1. Reading
- 2. Hearing
- 3. Writing
- 4. Speaking

How Many Words Do We Know? Referring to the last two groups for a moment, let us note one fact: that it is the group which we write but which we seldom or never speak which is largely responsible for keeping our letters from being a good substitute for a face-to-face interview; all because they do not seem natural.

Even supposing that the correspondent has a better vocabulary than the average man has, (as, of course, he should have) he probably will not know intimately more than ten thousand words, one-fiftieth as many words as an unabridged dictionary contains.

In fact, a very small group of words forms the bulk of our vocabulary. These forty-three make up about nine-tenths of the words we use:

(1)	are	(12)	as	(23)	her	(34)	that
(2)	be	(13)	at	(24)	if	(35)	there
(3)	have	(14)	but	(25)	in	(36)	they
(4)	it	(15)	can	(26)	me	(37)	this
(5)	of	(16)	come · /	(27)	much	(38)	though
(6)	the	(17)	cry	(28)	not	(39)	time
(7)	to	(18)	dear	(29)	on	(40)	we
(8)	will	(19)	for	(30)	one	(41)	with
(9)	you	(20)	get	(31)	say	(42)	write
(10)	about	(21)	go	(32)	she	(43)	your
(11)	all	(22)	hear	(33)	so		

The first nine of these are said to comprise one-fourth of them; the first thirty-four comprise one-half.

Since these forty-three words make up nine-tenths of every one's vocabulary, it is the other one-tenth which gives individuality to anyone's language. Moreover, it is by his handling of the same one-tenth that his English is pronounced good, bad, or indifferent.

This other tenth—how many words does it comprise? The size of the average vocabulary, says Opdycke, has been estimated in accordance with age in years as follows:

The	average	vocabulary at 8 years numbers	3,600 words
The	average	vacabulary at 10 years numbers	5,400 words
The	average	vocabulary at 12 years numbers	7,300 words
		vocabulary at 14 years numbers	9,000 words
The	average	adult's vocabulary numbers	11,000 words
		adult's vocabulary numbers	13,500 words

Evidence of Wide Vocabulary. A sales correspondent whose vocabulary appears to be excellent wrote the following for a chemical engineering company.

Dear Sir:

When nature endowed all things with the faculty for continuance of kind, weeds were especially gifted with resources for reproduction. An average weed plant, if not controlled, will yield hundreds of fertile seeds from July until frost.

If weeds are tolerated now, can you picture your roadway, tennis court, gutter or fence border next year—when all the pernicious and noxious vegetation, thriving this year, will be multiplied many fold?

Atlas Non-Poisonous Weed Killer completely kills all weeds and stops the seeds.

One gallon of Atlas Non-Poisonous Weed Killer diluted with ten gallons of water, is ample to clear five hundred square feet of densely vegetated surface. Most satisfactory results are obtained by utilizing an ordinary sprinkling can to apply Atlas Non-Poisonous Weed Killer solution, which easily and safely kills all vegetation—including poison ivy.

Apply Atlas Non-Poisonous Weed Killer now and enjoy the privilege of unmarred beauty in the landscape of your grounds. We are handing you an order blank and enclosing an addressed envelope for your convenience.

Faithfully yours,

Getting a Background in Language. If a man does not care what he says, nor how he says it, his word-stock, however poor, will serve his needs; but if a person earns his bread and butter by his pen, or if he takes a delight in reading the world's literature, he is likely—nay, almost obliged—to give some thought and time to the study of language, its growth and structure.

Gradually he learns that mere increase in the number of words with which he is acquainted will not solve his problems. Not quantity, but quality comes to be the first consideration in words for letter purposes. In both writing and speaking, we run across expressions that are open to criticism. "Don't say obligated. That's poor English. You should say obliged," says one stenographer to another. There are hundreds of words like obligated, words that cannot meet the tests of good usage.

Well-Recognized Usage. Let us see what those tests are. Isn't it true that if you hear questioned an expression used by a person who has a fine reputation for using good English, you will say, "Well, Dr. So-and-So uses that expression in his latest book." Is that any reason why it may be called good? Yes, because the expressions used by writers and speakers of standing in their serious works generally become accepted by all.

"Well," you may say, "Shakespeare said, 'And here am I, and wode within this wood' but, even so, you wouldn't say that wode is good English, would you?" Let us see. Shakespeare is certainly a writer of good standing, but how long ago did he live? Three hundred years, more or less. Since language is a live and growing thing, it doesn't stand still, any more than science or fashion does; so what Shakespeare said three hundred years ago may or may not hold good today. Thus the second test is whether the expression is up-to-date or current. This test wode could not pass; it is obsolete.

Now for the third test: In these days of rapid transit, east and west, north and south are coming nearer together; nevertheless it is true that some words still have various meanings in different parts of the country; furthermore, a word that is well enough known in one part may mean scarcely anything in another. Therefore, to meet the third test of good usage, a word should signify the same thing from coast to coast.

Thus we see that the expressions which are not reputable and current and national in their use are debarred from good standing until they can meet these tests.

Language changes with the times and manners. For instance, typewriter, dynamo, trolley, and automobile entered the language to name inventions.

Some new words come to stay; others have their little day, and pass out, as *camouflage* did after the war, when *disguise* and *deceive* returned to their former popularity.

Barbarisms. We should avoid such words as invite (for invitation), combine (for combination), enthuse (for become enthusiastic). All of these words are improper abbreviations for better expressions. Instead of saying "I am enthused," say "I am enthusiastic." Although some people still fall into the common error of saying they have an invite when they mean an invitation, a few years ago this barbarism, as well as recommend for recommendation, was frequently used by those who were uneducated.

Vulgarisms. How much more refined men's is than gents'; trousers than pants; everywhere than everywheres; ought not than hadn't ought. The foregoing expressions are commonly regarded as vulgar; they should be avoided in business letters. Similarly, we should avoid vulgarisms of a different class—what are known as "clipped" words: phone, photo, and per cent, for instance.

The Question of Slang. Slang is another division of generally undesirable language. Many business people think that a bit of slang gives novelty to their letter, and so it does—provided that it is very new.

Slang may sometimes render good service. The following letter, which is flowery as well as slangy, was successful in its appeal:

Dear Sir:

The flowers that bloom in the spring have nothing—on the hats in our spring exhibit.

The fairest flowers of the hat world are here assembled; the products of M. Mossant of France, Sig. Borsalino of Italy, and Messrs. Crofut & Knapp of America.

Totally new spring shapes and shades, new crowns and brims that tell the world: "Spring is here."

Algerian tans, Java browns, jade greens—gleaming pearl, and glowing amber—colors you've never seen before, colors you won't see anywhere else.

Your appearance will be brightened and cheered the moment you put one on. Do it this week!

Sincerely yours,

The following letter sells sport megaphones to cheer the football team:

Dear Sir:

Do you get a thrill from the musical thud of a toe against a pigskin?

If you do, very soon either the boys in a vacant lot or the college squad at practice camp will give you the football fever.

Last year the Sealright Sport Megaphone became a popular and useful novelty for the cheering section.

This year, it is up to you to take advantage of this fact—and increase your profits.

Everyone likes to yell, both young and old. That's the reason each year they enlarge football stadiums. When they do yell, they make the most noise possible. This sample will demonstrate to you how much it will increase the volume of your own cheer. Try it.

The purpose of the megaphone may be twofold. Primarily it is used to amplify a cheer. It was used last season by many concerns as a publicity stunt. They supplied the megaphones free to their local schools. It carried their advertising copy. It built good-will in their community.

Could you use a supply of our 1926 consumer price lists, imprinted with your name? A copy is enclosed. You could send them out with your regular correspondence or to a special mailing list.

May we hear from you this week?

Cheerfully yours,

Disadvantages of Slang. But, to counteract the possible advantage of novelty, slang has a number of disadvantages. For one thing, it becomes stale almost overnight. Moreover, even if the correspondent is so alert that he uses slang when it first appears, he is taking a chance that his reader may not understand him. The reader, for instance, may not know that Take the Huntley and Palmer is a new edition of Take the cake.

The following paragraph is slangy—and possibly appealing to college freshmen, yet it can claim little novelty. Perhaps better posted and up to us are reforming as they grow older!

We've always found that college men are a little better posted on clothes than anyone else. They know what they want. You can see how that puts it up to us—to provide them with exactly the kind of clothes they want to wear.

Worse than being stale, slang may be degraded, owing to its origin in the underworld. Such an association makes it vulgar from the very start, and therefore unsuited to business uses. It is not likely that the correspondent will need to use dope, gink, or stick 'em up.

Even if we admit that slang may be used for novelty's sake, it should not be abused. The business correspondent who habitually indulges in slang does so at his peril. When he sits down to compose the letters that are to represent his company to its clientele, the slang addict may search in vain for dignified or otherwise altogether appropriate words with which to clothe his thought.

Slang may go out like a candle flame at the least breath of wind. But occasionally, slang reforms. Once in a while, a word like *sweater* comes forward to the sinner's bench, and henceforth is freed of its undesirable association.

There are a few other classes of undesirable expressions, among them three kinds of improprieties. The first group is made up of words which are so much alike that the ignorant

or careless person is likely to confuse them. Do you know anyone who confuses respectively with respectfully, principal with principle, loose with lose?

The second group contains words which are used without due regard for the tradition or idiom of the language: different to, instead of different from; in regards to, instead of in regard to.

The third group includes errors made by the commonplace and uneducated: learn for teach.

The sentences which follow contain similar mistakes:

We have written the above party a letter (party for person).

In yesterday's mail we received a letter from you advising that on September 27th you asked us for quotations (advise for inform).

In the past three or four months the Chamber of Commerce has received hundreds of inquiries (past for last).

Jargon. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, the English novelist, in his book: "On the Art of Writing" devotes a most helpful chapter to what he calls "jargon." By "jargon" he means the use of words and phrases, often abstract terms, which, though correct, i.e., neither barbarisms nor improprieties, add nothing to the meaning of a passage, but merely clutter up the sentence. No one can defend this practice, but many of us, alas, are addicted to it. In a delightfully humorous yet scornful fashion Quiller-Couch shows the folly of much current use of such abstract terms—all vague in meaning—like condition, nature, persuasion, and degree. The prime offender, he says, is the word case.

All from One Letter. His criticisms may well be taken to heart by writers of business letters, like the man who wrote the letter from which the following sentences were taken:

In the case of all applicants whom you refer to us, we would like to know their telephone address if their coming is to be delayed.

nce

d

nd

In a case where you understand that we have quoted an applicant a wage rate less than we quoted you, you will be safe in assuming that an error or misunderstanding has occurred.

In all cases we are looking for the very best.

We will advise in cases where an appointment is needed.

It is not necessary to make an appointment for this purpose in *most cases*.

We do not pay traveling expenses except upon advance appointment in particular cases, and these cases are rare.

Business Lingo. Besides jargon of a general nature, the letter-writer should be especially on his guard against the peculiar jargon of commerce, known as "business lingo." Every supervisor of correspondence in the great concerns of the country wages a battle against the stereotyped phrases used in their letters.

Mr. Sherman Perry of the American Rolling Mills gives a long list of these undesirables under the title of "Defunct Phrases"; but he is only one of hundreds who are trying to free business writers from useless and stilted expressions.

DEFUNCT PHRASES¹

According to our records	At your earliest convenier
--------------------------	----------------------------

Advise	Attached	find
Along these lines	Attached	hereto

And oblige	Awaiting :	your furthe r o i	ders
------------	------------	--------------------------	------

As per	Beg
--------	-----

At the earliest possible moment

As the case may be	By return ma
As to your proposition	Complaint

Assuring you	of	our	prompt atten-	Contents	carefully	note
				- 4	4	

tion	Duly noted		
At all times	Enclosed herewith		
At an early date	Enclosed please find		
At hand	Enclosed you will fin		
At this time	Esteemed favor		

¹ Sherman Perry, Making Letters Talk Business, American Rolling Mill Co. Middletown, Ohio, 1924, p. 9.

Even date

DEFUNCT PHRASES (Continued)

Favor
For your information wish to advise
Hand you

Has come to hand

I have before me your letter

In due course

In reply wish to state that

In reply would say

Inst.

Kind order or favor

Oblige

Our Mr. Blank
Our records show
Permit me to say
Permit, me to state
Please be advised that
Present writing
Proposition and line

Prox.

Recent date

Referring to the matter

Regarding your communication of

Referring to your favor Same (as pronoun)

State (for say)
Take pen in hand

Thanking you in advance

The above subject company

This is to inform you that

This letter is for the purpose of asking that

Trust this will be satisfactory

Ult.

Under separate cover Under the above subject

Up to this writing Valued favor

We see by your letter

We take pleasure in sending you herewith

We wish to inform you that We wish to notify you that

We would advise Wish to say Would ask that Would say that Would state

Writer wishes to say Writer wishes to state

You claim You state

Your letter received

Yours of recent date to hand

You say

Different Standards in Conversation and in Writing. We have already hinted that there is a difference between what is good usage for conversation, and what is good usage for writing. The business letter holds a peculiar position as regards these two standards. On the one hand, the letter is written and must therefore meet the demands of written English. After all, the business letter is a piece of paper; it cannot treat the reader as the writer himself could do in face-to-face chat; it cannot depend upon a genial facial expression, or a pleasant

gesture to put across its message. Nevertheless, the correspondent realizes that from another point of view the letter represents himself. He hears the letter expert say, "Your letters are you." Therefore, he should try to make his letters do the work of a human being. He must look around for all the devices he can find for making words and phrases convey a living personality. Moreover, that personality should be his at its best. The words must sound like those he would use. The effect should be the one he might hope to create in person.

Written Talk. The next letter, which bears a homely typed letterhead, also bears a homely message but one that is, like the apples it sells, sound to the core. The writer lets nothing stand between him and his reader:

Buy a barrel of Good Apples, right off the tree.

Dear Sir:

If you have a real New England fondness for good apples, you will welcome a chance to get a winter's supply direct from the New Hampshire hills.

Good No. 1 Baldwins are selling up here by the barrel for about what you would have to pay for a small box of Western fruit. Our apples may not be quite as large, but their flavor is fine.

They will taste mighty good next winter, and you know the Baldwin is about the best keeping apple there is. We like to sell our apples direct to the folks who eat them, for such trade comes back year after year, and we both gain by saving the middleman's profit.

We have only one grade,—the best, as it doesn't pay to pick poor apples this year. They are all sound #1 apples, fine color, and free from any imperfections to start decay. We hope you will lay in a few barrels. We are picking now, and it would be better to ship them right off, as every handling hurts the apples and a freeze may come soon. So if you want to knock the high cost of living, mark what you can use below, and mail it to me right away.

Yours very truly,

W. L. Smith Conway Center, N. H.

Send me as follows:-

—— barrels fine No. 1 Baldwin Apples, @ 85c for which I will send (or enclose) \$——.

Note: These prices good only until Oct. 20. Unless otherwise directed will ship by B & M freight. Above prices are f. o. b. Conway, N. H., freight rate to Boston is 24c per 100 lbs., amounting to about 33c on a barrel.

Take 5% discount from above prices if you send check with order.

Reference, Conway National Bank.

Using the Words of Speech. In discussing the tone of the letter, some one gives the letter-writer this hint: "Write as you would talk." Another says, "Don't try to be literary." This is good advice if it is properly interpreted. Precisely, what does it mean? Merely that the business letter, although written, may contain the words that are cropping up in conversation—ordinary, heart-warming words that take away the possibly cold, lifeless, meaningless, prosiness of the letter.

Just an Old-Fashioned Fisherman. A prosperous packer of fish, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, is clever enough to give the impression that he is actually talking to his reader as an old-fashioned Gloucester fisherman would:

I'm just an old-fashioned fisherman; I don't know much about details of business—but I haven't heard from you since writing you last and I just thought that perhaps if I made you a real special offer it might at least give me a chance to prove to you the unusual high quality of the fish I am sending to my customers all over the country....

There isn't anything in the world I can say that can describe the wonderful taste of my fish. All I know is that once you taste them you'll be a steady customer. That's why I don't even ask you to send me any money in advance. I want you to try my mackerel, lobster or my get-aquainted assortment without risk on your part.

An Appeal to Mother. Since the following letter is full of words that suggest "baby talk," from the mother's point of view it is conversational. The phrases in italics seem to be the ones that produce the desired effect.

Dear little friend:

Next Tuesday, November 16, is going to be a very special day at H. & S. for *little girls and baby brothers*, and you will want mother to bring you in early.

There will be hundreds of dainty little garments, and the loveliest new furniture, just your size, for the nursery—all at special prices.

The big folks in your family will want to buy ever so many things, and you will have such a good time picking out the things you want.

Sincerely yours,

A Letter to the City Woman. An electric company uses the next two letters. The first is addressed to women who live in cities, women who have time and inclination to study artistic effects. The letter is designed to stimulate a longing for the luxury of soft artistic lighting.

A REFLECTION OF GOOD TASTE.

As a woman of discrimination you choose your curtain material, your wall-paper and rugs, with a view to their appearance under artificial light. These are the conditions under which you know they will receive critical inspection. Your dresses for evening wear undergo the same exacting test.

It is in the nice selection of proper lamps to reflect the true beauty of your home, your taste in dress, and your own personality, that you meet a problem.

Westinghouse Mazda Lamps by their great variety in style, their every degree of lighting intensity, offer an easy solution to this problem. May we serve you? We are lighting experts.

Yours for distinctive lighting.

P. S. We are as handy to you as your telephone.

A Letter to the Farmer's Wife. That particular letter might have failed to make an appeal to the city woman if it had used words of a homely tone like hitched up and mighty glad as the following letter does which is addressed to the woman who lives in the country.

Dear Mrs. Blank:

You'll wonder how in the world you ever got along without running water—once your Westinghouse Light and Power Plant is hitched up to an electric pump.

That's what folks tell us.

They say they had rather got used to the old "pump and carry" system and didn't realize how much work, loss of time and inconvenience it involved.

But when the Westinghouse unit automatically pumped their water for them and they had nothing to do but turn the faucet to get running water fresh from the well;—they were mighty glad the old order was changed.

They put in a modern bathroom.

Dad watered the horses every time he passed the trough the first day—just to assure himself that the water came without his pumping.

The whole family voted life more worth living.

Won't you fill out the enclosed card and drop it in the box for us? We'd like you to see this Westinghouse plant and a demonstration will not put you under any obligation at all.

Yours very truly,

It is worth noticing that neither of the Westinghouse letters uses words that are particularly learned; on the contrary, each contains many words which would naturally appear in the conversation of its particular type of reader. All the words in the dictionary, I suppose, are more or less useful to somebody somewhere, otherwise before now they would have been pushed out of the crowded pages.

Concrete Words. In addition to those groups of words we have already considered, there are others which are worthy of the letter-writer's attention.

Some words are valuable to letter-writers because they bring a picture before the mind's eye of the reader. Like the words used in a primer, all of them could be illustrated. Those are the words that make your product stand out in the reader's mind. They are the words about which we all agree as to meaning. In that respect they differ greatly from abstract words, like *condition*, *character*, and *nature*, of which we have spoken before.

Let us suppose for a moment that two furniture dealers write letters trying to sell their goods. One brings up an attractive, cozy, comfortable picture of a wing chair. The other one emphasizes fine value. As far as picture-making goes, the wing chair impression is by far the most definite. We call these words which give pictures, concrete words. They are a good choice for business purposes. When a man buys a chair, he gets a particular chair with legs and arms and back. knows just as much what he wants as the dealer for his part does. He buys webbing and stuffing and springs and wood and upholstery, and if these are satisfactory, he pays what they are worth. It is a concrete transaction. Even though at last the customer seems to be impressed only with the beauty and comfort of the chair, let us not forget that the letter using concrete words is like a telescope in its ability to bring about a keen appreciation of quality based on facts.

An Appeal to Imagination. The words which are going to bring the sale about are those which give detailed pictures. The next letter bears a clear-cut concrete message:

Dear Sir:

If you knew you had at the side of each window and door in your home a hole as large as a brick you would not wait a day till you had gotten hold of a contractor to stop up the holes. Yet the leakage space around every unweatherstripped window and door in your house is at least as great as that! And a hole that size will let in an awful lot of cold air. It is almost cruel to compel the furnace to try to keep up with it.

Better sign the enclosed postal card right now and get our estimate of cost for installing Higgin Metal Weather Strips. They soon pay for themselves in the saving of fuel and you have all the comfort thrown in without cost.

Yours very truly,

Good letters are never prosy, because they are messages put forth by the man with imagination. Such a man loves his business, and waxes enthusiastic about it. He is constantly measuring it, comparing it, and contrasting it; and the effect of his thinking may come out in a cleverly worded, figurative expression which will give life and charm to his letters.

Figurative Words, Sometimes. The writer of the following letter intensifies the power of the "enemy"—the microbes—by the use of a figure of speech:

Dear Sir:

Each microbe on your floors at the sound of the janitor's broom each morning, mounts his flying steed (a particle of dust) and goes on a rampage through your premises.

These gay riders and their dusty steeds do more damage and are the cause of more sickness and discomfort than we think.

There is an easy way for you to clip their wings so that they are sure of but one ride, and that's a tumble into the trash can.

A few handfuls of Fitch's Dustdown sprinkled over the floors before sweeping and your lively horsemen with their wild broncos are at once lassoed and hog-tied.

No more damage from dust; cleaner, brighter merchandise; a clean, bright store and more important yet—a healthier place for you and your help to work in—that's the result.

Dustdown sells for \$5.75 per barrel of 150 lbs. and a barrel will go a mighty long way. It is non-poisonous, practically odorless, destroys insect eggs, kills disease germs, keeps your floors clean and wholesome and prevents dust.

Order a barrel today.

The phrase "go straight as the crow flies" gives color to the following paragraph:

See the enclosed pictorial explanation of how easily you can go, and go straight as the crow flies, to the very latest official, CONTROLLING ruling.

Literal Words. There are other words which we call literal, thus implying that they say just what they mean. Such words may also be valuable. The company whose letter follows, wishes to appear straightforward and "on the level" when it outlines what it undertakes to do for its customers:

OUR PROPOSITION.

If you will send me your old carpets, rugs, old clothing and rags, I don't care how badly worn they are—I don't care what color they are, I will agree to scour, clean, dye and weave them into a new rug or rugs exactly the same pattern and color as you select from our catalog; and I will send it to you and allow you to keep it on your floor one week, with the understanding that if you notify me at any time within one week, you can return the rug to me at my expense, if you are not satisfied with it for any reason whatsoever.

The Power of Suggestion—Words of Our Childhood. Other words which give power to a letter are those which we have known from our earliest childhood—warm, glowing words, like *home* and *mother;* colloquial words such as children use in their talk among themselves. For all of us, whether or not we realize the fact, these words retain a special significance and can awaken in us a strong emotional reaction.

Why is this so, if not because we have forgotten or banished all but the pleasant side of childish experience? Accordingly, if the letter-writer can succeed in linking his message to those "good old days" in a way to bring back the happy dreams of childhood, to say the least, he has the reader with him, ready to regard favorably the message of the letter. As to whether or not he will eventually comply with the writer's wish, may depend, of course, on other considerations.

Notice in this letter the appeal to youthful memories through words which recall the mood of youth:

Dear Customer:

Remember when you were a kid and when it came this time of the year? Wasn't it hot out hoeing in the garden? And wasn't there a real kick in it when the job was done and you could jump on the old bike and beat it for the old swimmin' hole?

It is just as hot now as it was then and there are a lot of kids just as anxious to hop on their bikes and beat it for the swimming hole.

But a lot of these kids are going to need tires very shortly. Soon they will be around to you to invest their savings. Some will have their minds made up on a bicycle tire of a certain color. To others a tread design will appeal. And to still others, prices will be the thing that counts.

Whatever the specification, you will have no difficulty satisfying every one of them from a stock of "U.S." Bicycle Tires.

As you will see from the enclosed catalog, the U.S. Line gives you a complete range of colors, treads and prices from which your customers may make selection.

And when you reflect that the name U.S. is generally accepted as the standard of quality, whether it is on an automobile tire or a bicycle tire, you are assured of a quick turnover at a handsome profit.

When you fill out the order form on the back of this page, tell us the number of folders and blotters you can use.

Very truly yours,

Suggestions, Pleasant and Unpleasant. These words of powerful suggestion, or connotation, each of which has the strength of perhaps ten ordinary defining words, may be divided into two classes: (1) those that call up pleasant feelings; (2) those that call up unpleasant ones.

Comfort. The following letter seems as if it would get below the thickest skin with its suggestion of comfort:

Dear Sir:

Snug-lers.

The name itself helps sell the shoes. It suggests a big chair—an open fire—and comfort.

Snug-lers.

Warm feet—the glint of leather—a glow of satin—the softness of fine felt.

And yet the price is not high. Snug-lers are priced to fit the purse of the middle class—the class to which your most profitable customers belong. They sell readily and steadily.

The catalog shows the styles. The price list gives the number in stock for immediate shipment. The order blank is for your convenience.

Why not send an order now?

Very truly yours,

It is an interesting and profitable exercise to list the words in a letter which produce the pleasant suggestions. Notice how many of them appear in the following selections from letters:

The Call of the Wild.

The next twelve issues of Forest and Stream will contain those splendid journeys into the outdoors—those delightful moments with hunters and fishermen—naturalists and nature lovers. Here is the very best of clean, wholesome, outdoor literature which will mean so much to you.

A Note of Friendliness.

Dear Mr. Atkins:

I am mighty glad that you were in the store yesterday. You selected a splendid suit—and I know you will enjoy it!

It is a great satisfaction to us to serve you; and to promote this pleasure we have installed departments to supply the many things that supplement your suit.

Cordially yours,

The Use of Unpleasant Suggestions. Many letter-writers use the words which bring up pleasant memories only, because they believe that people buy only when they are in a pleasant, genial mood; but other writers feel that to awaken fear and other negative or destructive emotions may possibly be equally effective in inducing sales.

The Appeal to Fear. There is nothing pleasant about check forgery; on the contrary, it is something which some of us need to protect ourselves against. The following letter appeals to fear, yet it supports its emotional appeal by reasons why the prospect should purchase:

Mr. Payroll Check Prospect, Blankville, New York.

Dear Mr. Payroll Check Prospect:

Like most other employers you, no doubt, have been giving serious thought to paying employees by check.

The payroll bandit menace has become so acute as to force the issue—even to the point of leading the Postmaster General to urge the increased use of checks by large employers.

It is possible, however, that you may not have considered paying by check as a saver of time and money in addition to being a crime preventive.

The fact is that the Todd Payroll System not only protects the lives of paymasters and their associates against ruthless physical violence, but it also offers these other advantages:

First: It protects the pay checks against alteration and counterfeiting.

Second: It goes farther and protects the tradesmen or others who cash these checks.

And third: The cost is decidedly less than paying by cash.

Our new manual—"Modern Payroll Practice"—which goes into detailed descriptions of the latest and most economical methods in paying by check, is just off the press.

We shall gladly send you one of these with our compliments. A pencil notation on the face of this letter will bring it.

Very cordially yours,

In the following letter, likewise, the appeal is decidedly negative, as the italics we have used show:

Dear Sir:

The meanest man on your route is your greatest enemy.

He gambles with the lives of your children. He courts destruction by fire. He's an enemy of your family's health, happiness and comfort.

He's the fellow who makes farm life weary and distasteful, and he drives you on under handicaps that sap your own strength and make your life doubly hard. No—he wouldn't hitch his wife to a plow like his crusty ancestors did, but he has forced her to bear a far more tiring burden.

He's not your REAL self—he's just a Thoughtless person. Why, he wouldn't be that mean for the world. But, he's careless and unthinking.

Water is the most important thing in life, yet the chances are it's something you never stopped to think about. This folder gives many facts—read them over, and then send in the card for information that may lead to the biggest forward step in progress you could ever make. It's your farm, your life, your family. What are you going to do about it?

Yours very truly,

Two Pictures. The next letter arouses self-pity and vanity. It paints furnace tending at its worst, and shows the reader such an unpleasant picture of himself that he scorns his role. Then it shows the change—"the dividends in joy" that \$200 will bring. Thus it ends with a positive suggestion, designed to leave the reader in a buying frame of mind.

Dear Mr. —

Would you answer this ad?

"Men wanted for dirty jobs. Very unpleasant work. So disagreeable that it will make even a confirmed humorist swear.

"Only successful men need apply. Must own their homes. A day laborer would scorn the wages—only 65c a day."

It would be amazing, wouldn't it, if we received any applicants? They must be successful—men of caliber. Will anyone apply for this job?

"No," you say. But wait, isn't your name already on the list of unwilling workers? What about firing your furnace—210 days every year? No one could hire you to do it. Why do you continue doing it for nothing?—your time is at least worth \$200.

Wouldn't you like to know how others have saved \$200 in time—and made life pay an extra dividend in joy? One minute spent now in mailing the card will be returned to you with pleasing interest.

Sincerely yours,

Synonyms. We are all probably somewhat familiar with the three classes into which words are divided according to their meaning: synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms.

Whenever we have to choose between words which are alike or similar in meaning, we are dealing with synonyms. We soon discover that we have a great many more words than there are ideas. Probably every language which has gone into the making of the English language has contributed its word to parallel some word or other already in the language. Generally for every idea there are several words. The idea of speaking is basic in the following list of synonyms of said:

added	chirped	implored	ranted
agreed	choked	mumbled	recommended
answered	coaxed	murmured	snapped
asked	complained	observed	sobbed
bellowed	echoed	pleaded	stated
bragged	exclaimed	prayed	stuttered
burst out	gasped	protested	urged
cackled	howled	quoted .	whispered

Each of these words has a somewhat different meaning from every other. The careful writer should try to use each exactly.

One such word is often the old English—native—word, whereas the others are contributions from foreign languages—French, Latin, Greek—or what not.

For instance,

place of habitation: home, sanctum-sanctorum, quarters, domicile, apartment, villa, palace, dwelling, bungalow.

You or I may take a great deal of satisfaction out of knowing the meaning of some unusual words, but let us remember that the rarely used word is not likely to be a business-getter. Since we must often write to persons whose vocabularies are somewhat limited, we may not find it wise to indulge in verbal fireworks.

Long-Tailed Words. Even if one knows that vociferate means talk, that luminous means light, that cogitate means think, he should show good sense and use the simpler word in his business letters. Most "long-tailed words in osity and ation" seem artificial. They have seldom found a place in our everyday language, written or spoken.

Native or Classic Words. Although generally, letter-writers are advised to use native words by preference, such advice does not hold good when the native word actually is not the better known, nor when it does not give the exact meaning or the desired suggestion. In the following list of synonyms, you will notice that the words in the first and third columns are native; that those in the second and fourth are of classic (Greek or Latin) origin.

NATIVE	CLASSIC	NATIVE	CLASSIC
closeness cold daily early ease friendly learned native old	proximity frigid diurnal primitive facility amicable erudite indigenous venerable	pleasing rule soapy story talk truth turn uproot winner	delectable govern saponaceous narrative conversation veracity revolve eradicate victor

Some Helpful Books About Synonyms. To help the writer use synonyms exactly and powerfully, there are a number of books in which the subtle differences in word meaning are discussed: books like Crabb's English Synonyms, Fernald's English Synonyms, Antonyms and Prepositions, Roget's Thesaurus, and the unabridged dictionaries. Perhaps the most valuable of all for the expert writer is Roget; while the dictionaries are the particular friends of the letter-writing apprentice.

Antonyms. The second group of words which one runs across may be words of opposite meaning, for instance, hot, cold; warm, cool; black, white; selfish, unselfish. Many pairs of antonyms, as such words are called, are like selfish, unselfish, in that one of the pair carries a positive suggestion and the other a negative. We know that the business writer should recognize the danger of making negative suggestions. A knowledge of the antonym of the negative word may possibly enable him to present his thought from the constructive viewpoint.

Useful for Getting Contrast. Antonyms are words by which he can get contrasts. They can help him bring out clearly the most interesting point in his sales talk. Hundreds of letter-writers use antonyms to show both the desirability of using their goods and service, and the undesirability of going without their product.

This letter uses contrast throughout:

Dear Neighbor:

We all wear shoes, and we all know what a difference it makes to us whether or not the shoes are comfortable. Pinched toes and crowded feet have, at some time, made us all unhappy and uncomfortable.

Now let's agree not to make our feet unhappy any more. It isn't fair to them, nor to ourselves. Nature intended that five toes should have all the room they needed, and if we don't give it to them, they'll make their complaints known.

But they'll be healthy and contented if we give them Educator shoes. These shoes—Educators—are properly built, scientifically designed to give the foot all the space it needs for comfort. Bones don't get pinched or crowded in these shoes. Educators are made for all ages of children as well as for grown-ups.

And here's another fact about Educators they are just as fine looking shoes as you can find anywhere. Those in our store are in the latest styles, and they look just as good in the mirror as they feel on the foot. The prices are reasonable enough, especially when you remember that you are getting the best of materials and the kind of skillful labor which has made the Rice and Hutchins name a leader in the shoe trade for sixty years.

Homonyms. The third class of words comprises homonyms. A homonym is a word which agrees in sound but differs in form from another: words such as buy, by; sell, cell; to, too, two; principal, principle; complement, compliment; cellar, seller; sale, sail; stationary, stationery.

First of all, we need to enlarge our knowledge of these words so that we know the homonym of any word; not only its meaning, but its spelling. To be sure, one of each pair may be much more commonly demanded than the other is; but when the occasion demands the less frequently used one, the writer and the stenographer should be able to spell it correctly.

Puns, a Matter of Taste. Granting that the writer knows words like these, one question that arises is this: Should he use the pun based on them in his advertising? How many buy-words there have been! How many times always and all ways have been interchanged to get attention! You know that the pun is said to be the lowest form of wit, and yet some puns can be used more or less aptly. Is there not effectiveness in the slogan of the L. Needles Brooker Company, shirt manufacturers: "It Takes Needles To Make Shirts"; and in that of the Middi-Shade Co., blue serge suit makers, who advertise themselves as: "Surgical Specialists Operating on Blue Serge Only"?

Groping for Just the Right Word. If we can harness our knowledge of these three word classes—synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms—and make them work for us, we shall be stimulated to go further in our intensive study of words. Most of us find that as soon as we begin to use words exactly, we have to grope for just the right word to express the fine shades of meaning we wish to convey to our reader. It is obvious that we need to know more words.

If you are curious to see just how large your vocabulary is, perhaps you may arrange to take one of "The Inglis English Tests," vocabulary forms A, B, or C, devised by Professor

Alexander Inglis of Harvard University.² These tests, widely used in secondary and collegiate classes, consist of one hundred and fifty scientifically selected words used in phrases or sentences. Beside each expression are five words, one of which is to be underscored as having the same meaning as the word in question:

He uttered the document—wrote, read, recited, discovered, published.

Learning Words That are Useful. From now on, our efforts should be more and more effectively directed. The dictionaries and cross-word puzzles bring to light hundreds of strange words at which we exclaim indignantly, "Whoever heard of that?" When we talk of enlarging our stock of words, we certainly do not mean that the correspondent should waste his time trying to master words he will seldom or never meet again. What use has he for transigient, pertinacious, condign, refulgent, anent, lazsaronism, eburnean, wot, and atropical in his everyday use of language?

Perhaps at this point some one may ask, "I thought you advised me to enlarge my vocabulary. If you do not want me to learn new or strange words, what do you want me to do?" Let us assure such a person that there is plenty of work for him to do in cultivating the words which perhaps he has heard and used himself hundreds of times yet doesn't really know.

How Meanings Become Blurred. Let us see how this peculiar need to investigate the meaning of common words arises. You may first come across a new word while you are reading. You may guess what it means from the rest of the sentence. Shortly afterward, you hear or see it again and remember it. Perhaps in the next day or two, you, yourself, use it. Now, it is hardly likely that you will use it correctly under these circumstances, yet one of your hearers may pick up his idea of the meaning of that word from your use of it. Since so often we

² Alexander Inglis, The Inglis Tests of English Vocabulary, Ginn and Co.

guess at the meanings of words, it is no wonder that the words commonly used become blurred.

Here are a few such words whose precise meaning you may need to look up:

nice, transpire, livid, enervated, splendid, fine, awful, delicious, team, quite.

Developing an Interest in Words—Through Reading. Another question might be in order at this point: "How shall we get any hint of what words will be useful, if we don't know them?"

We have already pointed out that we know more words by sight than we ourselves use. These are good candidates for our closer attention. Thus, as we come across new words in our reading, if we observe them with the idea of seeing what they suggest as well as what they mean, with the aim of using some of them ourselves in our writing and conversation, we shall have taken the first step forward.

The business writer should develop an interest in words through noting: how they are constructed; what their present meaning is; what changes in meaning they have undergone.

As we meet words with which we are familiar we may find considerable pleasure in noting whether or not they are used exactly; whether or not each harmonizes with its word neighbors; and, lastly, whether or not it aids, by means of its length and sound, in giving life and rhythm to the sentence. We should be eager to devote a large share of our leisure to the reading of good books, realizing that increasing the reading vocabulary is the first step toward increasing the speaking and writing vocabularies.

—Through Use of a Good Dictionary. The letter-writer should own and use a good college dictionary, such as the Standard or Webster's. The dictionary can settle most doubtful points of usage and if enthusiastically and consistently consulted will reveal its treasures to him who seeks them. The

following quotation affords us an opportunity to see what the publishers claim for the *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:* "To enhance its usefulness, the Collegiate includes in its 1256 pages the following features:

- "1. Hundreds of new words.
 - 2. Synonyms listed, explained and compared.
- 3. Quotations from authoritative writers of English appended to many definitions to show just how the word is used in these senses.
- 4. Irregular parts of speech given.
- 5. Pronunciation shown by the familiar Websterian diacritical marks and respelling.
- 6. Use of capital letters indicated.
- 7. Words divided into syllables.
- 8. Rules for spelling.
- 9. Rules for punctuation.
- 10. Nine useful supplementary departments, including Geographical and Biographical Dictionaries."
- —Through Practice. Finally, the business man can enlarge his vocabulary by introducing his new word acquaintances into his business letters, with a three-fold purpose ever in mind:
 - 1. To choose the word that defines his meaning precisely.
 - 2. To choose the word which will suggest powerfully and positively to the reader the action which he wishes him to take.
 - 3. To have at his command a large number of words that are without question within the range of his reader.

To sum up the processes of properly enlarging our vocabulary, we should first observe written and spoken English, and grow more alert in picking up useful words wherever we may run across them. Secondly, we should check up our first impressions of their meanings in a word book such as the dictionary, and then we should begin to put the new word to work for us.

A Test on Choice of Words. In the following form sales letter to be sent to persons who are entitled to receive congratulations, the tone is strongly emotional. Analyze the letter and make a list of words and phrases which have an emotional character—carrying positive or pleasing suggestions.

Mr. John Blank Blankville, Pa. Dear Mr. Blank:

May I add my congratulations to those of your many friends on your (election or appointment) to (here give name of position)?

There is only one thing that could please me more than to see you make a big success of your new work. That would be to feel that I had been of some service in helping you to do so. So I am going to make a suggestion that I know would help you.

You want to put your office on an efficient business basis. If you use a system that will give you quick, satisfactory service, give you personal control over all money, and prevent mistakes and disputes, it would be a real help to you, wouldn't it?

It is precisely because the National Cash Register System does these things, that so many public officials all over the country are now using it. It reduces their overhead expense and helps them make good on their "jobs."

Now of course, I'm selling National Cash Registers. But nevertheless, Mr. Blank, I am absolutely sincere in saying that this system would be of the greatest help to you in making the success we all want you to make. May I show you what it would do for you?

Sincerely yours,

CHAPTER XI

WEEDING OUT COMMON MISTAKES

Originality Desirable but Correctness Essential. Many ambitious letter-writers put more effort into trying to be original than they do into having their letters correct. No business writer can afford to be more concerned with frills and furbelows than with the materials and workmanship that warrant the approval of sensible people.

The writer needs to make sure, first of all, that none of his letters contain any grammatical errors, because these might leave such an unfavorable impression on his reader that whatever efforts he had put into making the letter interesting and original would be utterly wasted. Correctness and effectiveness go together.

A Review of Grammar. The letter-writer should review grammar until he is sure that his knowledge of it is sound so far as it goes. A good book to have at hand for consultation is Mason Long's, A College Grammar.\(^1\) It is authoritative yet simple enough for most business letter-writers who have gone as far as high school. The chief value of such language equipment to the correspondent is that it not only furnishes the answer to his question but the reasons back of the correct form.

This ability to substitute a well-founded decision for shabby guesswork in questions of language does away with the commonplace, inaccurate and hit-or-miss wording of the handicapped correspondent and gives him, instead, the sense of security which comes from understanding, and the knowledge that his language has the power to move his reader. All of us

¹Mason Long, A College Grammar, The Ronald Press Company.

are helped by an occasional review of the points of grammatical usage. Even when we talk with the men and women who know language best, we find that they readily admit that there is still plenty for them to learn before they would be inclined to class themselves as experts.

The Parts of Speech. Let us look at this subject a little closer. Do you remember the parts of speech? An astonishingly large number of persons who are asked to name them begin bravely enough, "Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs," and then they stop. They know there are more but cannot recall them, and yet the other three divisions, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections, are among the most important of words.

Idea Conveying Versus Idea Relating Words. In the sentence, "Brown bought heavily in the wool market although his senior partner protested," every word except in and although suggests a definite idea. They all belong to the first five parts of speech named. Brown, market, and partner are nouns; his is a pronoun; the, wool, and senior are adjectives; bought and protested are verbs; heavily is an adverb.

What a contrast in vividness these words offer to the connectives: in (a preposition) and although (a conjunction)! We all find that abstract relations are hard to keep our finger on, and so we are likely to forget about the if's, and's, and but's.

While we are about it, let us recall not only the names of the parts of speech but some other few essentials regarding them.

Nouns—Proper and Common. A noun is the name of anything; from cabbages to kings. If the noun names a particular thing it is called a proper noun and begins with a capital letter, as: Paris, Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, United States Steel Corporation. If the word names a class of things it is called a common noun. Some classes thus named are of material or physical things, like: tool, street, ship, city; some, the collective

nouns, deal with variously named groups, as: gang, herd, and school; some others, the abstract nouns, deal with ideas or qualities, as: gravitation, relation, weight, size, hope, courage. But all of these words, since they do not name particular things, are common nouns.

Collectives. Nouns have certain "properties"—or characteristics of use—namely: number, person, gender, and case (see page 119ff.). To some extent these different properties or uses of a noun are indicated by differences in its form.

Collective nouns, of which flock, group, lot, and class are other examples, are almost always singular in form. However, since they bring together a number of individuals, they have a plural meaning. Generally, they require a singular verb, as in the sentence, "That lot of goods is not up to sample," because the group—not the individual in the group—is emphasized. When, as occasionally happens, the individuals are thought of separately, a plural verb is needed: "The list of applicants for the position were considered individually for days."

Abstract Nouns. The nature of the group of common nouns known as abstract nouns is for many persons a little difficult to grasp—just because they are abstract, not concrete. In a certain college examination given to a special class of young men who needed to brush up in grammar, the question was asked: "What is an abstract noun? Give an example." One of the students wrote: "An abstract noun is the name of an inanimate object. Example, my own mind." Another went him one better: "An abstract noun is the name of something that does not exist. Example, charity."

Although in this case the examples presented by the students fitted their definitions with startling appropriateness, the term abstract noun might have been defined more accurately as: the name of a quality; then the words the students mentioned, mind or charity, might have been given as examples.

Pronouns. A pronoun is a word which takes the place of a noun. "Your jobbers' representative will be coming soon; watch for him." Him is a pronoun because it stands for the noun representative.

The noun for which the pronoun is substituted is known as its antecedent. In the example we have just taken, representative is the antecedent of him because it is the noun for which the pronoun is substituted. There are several classes of pronouns, of which personal, relative, interrogative, demonstrative, and adjective are the most important. Pronouns, like nouns, have the properties of number, person, gender, and case (see page 119ff.).

In contrast to nouns, which in the course of centuries have dropped their case endings—that is to say, the special forms which were once used to indicate case relation—pronouns have kept their old terminations to show such relations. Largely because of this fact, we find pronouns one of the most difficult groups of words to manage properly.

Personal Pronouns. To master the table of forms—or declension—of personal pronouns is decidedly worth while:

SINGULAR	Plural		
First Person			
Nom. I	Nom. we		
Poss. my, mine	Poss. our, ours		
Obj. me	Obj. us		
Second Person			
Nom. thou	Nom. you		
Poss. thy, thine	Poss. your, yours		
Obj. thee	Obj. you		
Third Person			
Nom. he, she, it	Nom. they		
Poss. his, her, hers, its	Poss. their, theirs		
Obj. him, her, it	Obj. them		

Personal pronouns are so called, not, as is sometimes incorrectly supposed, that they refer always to human beings, but because they show by their forms what is the *grammatical person* of their antecedent. A first person pronoun indicates by its form the speaker; a second person, the individual spoken to, and the third person, the individual or object spoken of. They, for instance, shows by its form that the individuals or objects spoken of are meant; my without question refers to the speaker, and yours to the person addressed.

Relative and Interrogative Pronouns. Who (or which) is either used as a relative pronoun to introduce a subordinate clause, or as an interrogative to introduce a question. Although which is not declined, who has the following forms:

SINGULAR AND PLURAL

Nom. who Poss. whose Obj. whom

Demonstrative Pronouns. That and this are used as demonstrative pronouns to point out. That refers to something more remote than the thing to which this calls attention. Examples: "That has not been paid, but this has."

These pronouns have different forms for the singular and plural.

SINGULAR	PLURAL
that	those
this	these

Adjectives. An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun. Adjectives derived from proper nouns generally refer, like the nouns on which they are based, to particular individuals, persons, places, etc., and therefore begin with a capital letter. Occasionally, however, an adjective derived from a

proper noun has lost its original significance and no longer begins with a capital. Thus, we have—arabic numeral; roman type; turkish towel, and macadam road.

Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns, usually, by adding a syllable, such as -an, -ian, -y, -ish, -ese, etc.: America-American; Roosevelt-Rooseveltian; Boston-Bostonian (never, except in ridicule, Bostonese); but Japan-Japanese; Jew-Jewish; England-English.

When the demonstrative pronouns are followed by a noun which they modify, they become adjectives—pronominal adjectives, they are then called. "That bill has not been paid, but this one has."

Adjectives permit of certain changes in form to indicate what is called *comparison* (see page 120).

Verbs. A verb is a word that expresses action or being, as: to sell, to be. The predicate verb is the word that makes an assertion supposed to be true of the subject. When the assertion is limited as true of a particular time, or as being made by a particular person, etc., the verb is known as finite: "We await your order."

In contrast to the finite verb is the infinitive, including forms that are called participles and forms that are called gerunds. This is not thus limited in its scope; as, "To repeat, ordering early is advisable." To repeat is an infinitive, ordering is a gerund.

Verbs have the properties of number, person, tense, voice, and mood (see page 121ff.).

Verb forms are varied, and it is well to review the full tables of forms (conjugations) of several verbs as given in a grammar text. Since many common verbs have irregular forms and for this reason are the cause of frequent errors, we should know the principal parts of the irregular verbs together with those of a few other confusing verbs listed on pages 116 and 117.

PAST PARTICIPLE PAST INFINITIVE borne bore bear begun began begin blown blew blow broken broke break burst burst burst chosen chose choose come came come done did do dragged dragged drag drawn drew draw drunk drank drink driven drove drive drowned drowned drown eaten ate eat fallen fell fall fought fought fight fled fled flee flowed flowed flow flew flown fly froze frozen freeze got got get went gone go grow grew grown hung hung hang hanged hanged hang knew known know laid laid lay led led lead lie lay lain lied lie lied loosed. loosed. 1oose lost lost lose paid paid pay proved proved prove ride rode ridden ring rang rung rise rose risen run ran run see saw seen set set set shine shone shone

Infinitive	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
swear	swore	sworn
swim ·	swam	swum
throw	threw	thrown
wake	woke, waked	waked
weav e	wove	woven
weep	wept	wept
write	wrote '	written

Adverbs. An adverb is a word that modifies a verb, adjective or other adverb:

This product keeps very well in almost any climate.

Well modifies the verb keeps; very modifies the adverb well; almost modifies the pronominal adjective any.

Adverbs, like adjectives, provide for changes in form to indicate comparison.

Adverbial constructions need to be distinguished from adjectival ones. Test them by finding out what part of speech is to be modified.

Prepositions. A preposition is a word that shows the relation of the noun or pronoun which follows it to the rest of the sentence.

Conjunction. A conjunction is a word that connects words, phrases or clauses as: and, if, but. When the elements to be connected are similar in form, what is known as a coordinate conjunction is demanded. To illustrate: In the expression, freight or express, two nouns are connected; hence or, a coordinate conjunction, is required. In the expression, to the employer but not to the employee, two phrases are connected by the coordinate conjunction but. In the expression,

when the goods are properly displayed and when the service is excellent, two subordinate clauses are connected by the coordinate conjunction and.

But if the parts to be related to each other are not of equal value the subordinate conjunction is needed.

To illustrate:

If this battery fails to work, send it back.

If, which is a subordinate conjunction, joins the rest of the subordinate clause this battery fails to work to the main clause send it back.

Interjection. Interjections are words which express emotion; they are equivalent to exclamations. They include such words as *indeed! bah! oh! ah! pshaw!* This class of words is very small, but since these words have been overworked, their number is constantly being enlarged by words that are ordinarily used as other parts of speech; as, *beautiful! dreadful!* But after all, interjections are of little use in business letters.

Word Properties. Now let us look a little closer at some of the properties of parts of speech that we have mentioned: number, case, person, comparison, tense, and voice, which are to be involved (later in this chapter) in the correction of some very common errors.

Number. Number is that property of words which shows whether one or more than one is meant. If one is meant, the number is singular; if more than one is meant, plural.

The number of the verb agrees with the number of the subject. Likewise, the pronominal adjectives *this* (plural *these*) and *that* (plural *those*) agree in number with the nouns they modify.

Case. Case is a property of nouns or pronouns which shows their relation to the rest of the sentence.

Nominative Case. A noun or pronoun is in the nominative case when it stands in one of four relations:

1. If it is the subject of a sentence, as,

Business is good.

He works there.

2. If it is a predicate nominative, that is, a noun or pronoun which comes after a linking verb (such as, to be, to become, etc.) and means the same thing as the subject, as:

Jones is the manager. (or) Who is that? It is I.

3. If it is a nominative by address, as:

Mr. President, every one appreciates your attitude.

4. If it is in apposition with a noun or pronoun (i.e., follows the noun or pronoun immediately and means the same thing as it):

He, Jack, works there. (in apposition with the subject) Jones is the manager, the one to see. (in apposition with the predicate nominative)

Mr. Mayor, your Honor, we agree with you heartily. (in apposition with a nominative by address)

Possessive Case. A noun or pronoun is in the possessive case:

1. If it shows possession:

His training happens to be of interest to me. The firm's policies are broad.

2. If it is in apposition with a noun or pronoun in the possessive case:

His, the last applicant's, training happens to be of interest to me.

Objective Case. A noun or pronoun is in the objective case:

1. If it is the direct object of the verb:

We have sold that desk set.

I brought her back to the office.

2. If it is the object of a preposition:

I never knew a workman like him.
The contract was signed by A. A. White.

3. If it is the assumed subject of the infinitive verb:

I knew him to be honest.

4. If it is in apposition to any noun or pronoun in the objective case:

We have sold that desk set—the green one. (in apposition with the direct object)

The contract was signed by the president, Mr. John Albert. (in apposition with the object of a preposition)

I knew him, the *father*, to be honest. (in apposition with the assumed subject of the infinitive)

Comparison—Positive, Comparative, Superlative. Comparison is a property of adjectives or adverbs which indicates the degree of intensity meant, as: good, better, best; swiftly, more swiftly, most swiftly.

When no particular degree is expressed the form is called positive:

The black thread was coarse.

When the quality expressed by the adjective or adverb in one object is compared with that in another, what is called the comparative degree should be used.

The white thread was coarser than the black.

When more than two objects are compared what is called the superlative degree is used.

The green thread was the coarsest of the three.

Forms for the Degrees of Comparison. Generally, the comparative form is expressed by adding r or er to the positive degree, as: fine, finer; fast, faster.

The superlative is formed by adding st or est when the positive is a word of one syllable, as: coarse, coarsest; strong, strongest.

When, however, the word contains more than one syllable, it is generally less awkward to precede the positive form by the word *more* to show the comparative, and *most* to show the superlative, as: *more fragile; most satisfactory*.

This latter method of comparison allows one to express inferior degrees by the use of *less* and *least*, as: *less warm*; *least comfortable*.

Tense. Tense is a property of verbs which indicates the time at which the action takes place.

The three main divisions of time are past, present and future.

Yesterday, he *sold* his business. (past) Today, I *leave* for California. (present) Tomorrow, you *will receive* a telegram. (future)

A verb in any one of these tenses represents the action as going on in those times.

In order to express action as having been completed or perfected in one of three times (or tenses) we use the auxiliary or helping verb have.

I have done that before today. (present perfect)
He had resigned before the error was detected. (past perfect)
You will have gone by the time I arrive. (future perfect)

It is important to indicate the correct time by using the proper tense form. Furthermore, the order or the sequence of the tenses should be logical.

In the following sentence the writer uses tense forms very accurately.

Your request for a Gillette display is gladly being filled. We shall hope in turn to hear that it has increased your sales of Gillette Safety Razors and Blades.

Is being filled is the present tense in the passive voice, progressive form; shall hope is a future tense, active voice, expressing simple futurity; has increased is a present perfect tense expressing action completed at the present time.

Voice. Voice is the property of verbs which represents the subject either as acting or being acted upon. There are two voices, active and passive.

Active Voice. The active voice represents the subject as acting:

The company declared a dividend.

Passive Voice. The passive represents the subject as being acted upon:

A dividend was declared by the company.

The phrase by the company indicates the agent. However, the usual failure of writers to indicate the agent, because of carelessness or awkwardness, is one of the reasons the handbooks of style characterize the passive verb as "weak." Although the passive may occasionally be demanded to prevent a shift in point of view, it is often not clear.

Secondly, the spirit of the passive voice is contradictory to the action-getting letter; consequently, the careful letter-writer generally avoids this form. It is fairly easy to detect the passive voice if you are revising a letter, because it is always

a verb phrase which contains part of the verb to be, as: has been done, although not all verb phrases which contain part of the verb to be are in the passive voice, as: I am going. The real test is found in observing whether the verb represents the subject as acting, or as being acted upon.

Common Mistakes to Avoid. Let us now take up one after another some sentences which illustrate the mistakes that are most common in business language today.

Remember the importance of understanding the reason for every change made. If you can grasp the point in each of these mistakes you will no longer have to rely for your language decisions on the broken reed: "That sounds right to me." What sort of standard is this if one has been making the same error all his life? In fact our companions at home and abroad no less than ourselves are responsible for reforming or deforming our language.

The certain way to overcome embarrassing language weakness is first to make sure we understand the grammatical construction in question, and then, in both our written and oral composition, to practice over and over the correct forms.

Certain Words Are Singular. Now for the sentences containing the mistakes:

WRONG: Every one of our products are guaranteed. RIGHT: Every one of our products is guaranteed.

Are is wrong and is is correct because the number of the verb (is) must agree with the subject (Every one). Every, every one, each, anybody, neither, no one, nobody, and the like are all similar in number.

The following sentences using these words are correct:

- (a) Neither of the department managers lost his patience with the complainant.
- (b) Nobody in the office will voice his discontent.
- (c) Either the gray dress or the green one is becoming to you.
- (d) Each of these designs has its merits.

None logically demands the singular verb, but usage allows it to take a singular or a plural verb, as:

- (a) None of these goods is very new.
- (b) None of these goods are very new.

Collective Nouns and Their Verbs.

Wrong: A small number of invoices were found incorrect.

Right: A small number of invoices was found incorrect.

The meaning of this sentence puts the emphasis not on the individuals grouped together but upon the group itself. Therefore, the number of the verb is singular; but where, on the contrary, the subject is a collective noun which does emphasize the individuals, its sense is plural and the verb is plural to agree with it, as:

The committee were not agreed as to the plan.

Sherman Perry, correspondence supervisor at the American Rolling Mills, gives in one of his bulletins the following interesting group of sentences under this topic, written in correct form:

- (a) The committee has reported.
- (b) One hundred tons of sheets was shipped yesterday.
- (c) Seventy feet of culvert was sold.
- (d) The United States is holding an election.
- (e) Six and eight is fourteen.
- (f) The company is prosperous.
- (g) The army is marching.
- (h) Thousands of dollars were counted out one by one.
- (i) Twenty years is a long time.
- (j) Two-thirds is enough.

Correct Form of Third Person of Verb.

WRONG: The price of these articles vary.
RIGHT: The price of these articles varies.

The subject of this sentence is *price* (not *articles*). *Price* is singular, the verb must also be singular. *Varies* is the proper form for the third person singular of this verb.

Number Agreement of Subject and Verb.

WRONG: The service we render as well as the goods we sell are bound to please you.

RIGHT: The service we render as well as the goods we sell is bound to please you.

The simple subject of the sentence is service, modified by the clause, (which) we render. The expression, as well as the goods we sell, is a parenthetical one which does not affect the number of the verb. Other expressions like, together with, no less than, beginning with, likewise, do not affect the number of the verb.

Subjects Joined by "or."

Wrong: Neither the work nor the pay are what my brother expected.

RIGHT: Neither the work nor the pay is what my brother expected.

Work and pay are both singular subjects. When singular subjects are connected by or, or nor they take the singular verb, because not both but one or the other is meant.

Subjects Joined by "and."

Wrong: The bookkeeper, the stenographer, and the order clerk calls for correspondence from that file every day.

RIGHT: The bookkeeper, the stenographer, and the order clerk *call* for correspondence from that file every day.

The three subjects, bookkeeper, stenographer, order clerk, are joined by and: therefore, since the subject indicates more than one, the plural verb is required.

Verb and Subject Agree in Number.

Wrong: The most valuable possession of the concern are its customers.

RIGHT: The most valuable possession of the concern is its customers.

If we remember that the verb agrees with the *subject* in number we shall not be tempted to make it agree with the predicate noun. The subject of this sentence is *possession*, a singular, abstract noun, which calls for the singular verb is.

"There" as an Expletive.

Wrong: There is several ways of obtaining the same result. Right: There are several ways of obtaining the same result.

There is simply an introductory word called an expletive. The real subject of the sentence is the noun ways which follows the verb. Ways is plural and requires the plural form are. On the contrary, in the sentence:

There is every reason to believe the man's claims.

the subject noun which governs the verb is reason; it is singular; therefore the latter sentence is correct as it stands.

Contraction of "do not."

Wrong: This customer *don't* pay his bills promptly. Right: This customer *doesn't* pay his bills promptly.

Don't is the contraction for do not, not does not. The third person singular of the verb is a special form which is often incorrectly used when it is contracted in the negative. The following forms are correct:

I do you do he does

I don't you don't he doesn't

Agreement of Pronominal Adjective and Noun.

Wrong: Those kind of rugs will wear well.
RIGHT: That kind of rug will wear well.

Kind is the noun modified by the pronominal adjective. Kind is singular: therefore it requires to agree with it the singular form that instead of the plural form those.

Are you one of the hundreds who find it hard to say, this sort, that kind? If so, you should frequently practice these correct forms over and over.

Singular Nouns Ending in "s."

WRONG: News of his promotion have come. RIGHT: News of his promotion has come.

News is singular although, like some other nouns: politics, athletics, economics, it ends in s. It requires a singular verb.

The following is correct.

Athletics is more popular with that group than economics is.

Nouns Not Modified by Pronouns.

WRONG: Check some of them policies please. RIGHT: Check some of these policies please.

Policies, as a noun, should be modified by the pronominal adjective, these or those; not by the pronoun them.

Subject in the Nominative Case.

WRONG: *Him* and I have been partners for twenty years. Right: *He* and I have been partners for twenty years.

There are two subjects to this sentence; he and I are both in the nominative case. Him is wrong because it is the objective form.

The following is correct:

The Brown Company and we have united.

Subject of Unexpressed Verb.

WRONG: She is a better typist than me. RIGHT: She is a better typist than I.

In this sentence, the verb of the last clause is understood. If it were expressed that clause would read, than I am. The fact that am is understood, and not expressed, does not make it correct to regard the pronoun as the object of than. Than, by the way, is a conjunction and does not take an object.

Parenthetical Expression Cause of Error.

WRONG: Whom did you say ordered this odd lot? RIGHT: Who did you say ordered this odd lot?

This is a complex sentence containing the main clause did you say and the subordinate clause who ordered this odd lot. The main clause did you say, divides the subject of the clause from its verb ordered. Since who is the subject it must have the nominative form. Whom is wrong because it is the objective form. We must not be thrown off our guard by the insertion of such expressions as did you say, do you suppose—(think, believe).

Direct Object a Clause.

Wrong: Send me whomever is waiting. Right: Send me whoever is waiting.

The direct object of the verb send is the whole clause which follows, whoever is waiting. The subject of this clause is whoever, hence the nominative form is required. Whomever is the objective form.

Case Before and After the Linking Verb "to be."

WRONG: It is *him* that has your ledger sheet. RIGHT: It is *he* that has your ledger sheet. The verb to be, in any of its forms, am, is, was, were, etc., never takes an object; instead it is merely a link between the noun or pronoun which precedes it and the noun, pronoun, or adjective which follows it. The nouns or pronouns which are linked by to be, agree in case. It, as the subject of the sentence, is nominative, he is the proper form for the predicate nominative.

Occasionally, to be links substantives in the objective case. The following example is correct:

The house detective declared the sought-for shop-lifter to be her.

Object of Verb.

Wrong: Who did the auditor consult?

RIGHT: Whom did the auditor consult?

When this sentence is changed to its natural order, it reads, "The auditor did consult whom." The pronoun is the object of the verb *did consult*, therefore the objective form *whom* is required. Who is the nominative form; therefore incorrect.

The following sentence is a more complicated example of the same error. Since some words have been omitted the writer is likely to lose track of the construction.

Wrong: The customer scolded us both but I more than he.

Right: The customer scolded us both, but (she scolded)

me more than (she scolded) him.

Me and him are correct because they are both objects of the unexpressed verb scolded.

Object of Preposition.

Wrong: Some of we boys go to school nights. Right: Some of us boys go to school nights.

Us instead of we is correct because the pronoun is the object of the preposition of; hence, the objective form is required.

"Between You and Me" is Correct.

WRONG: Between you and I that cashier will lose his job

some day.

RIGHT: Between you and me that cashier will lose his job

some day.

Between you and I is one of the most common errors we make. We would not say between I and you, and a moment's thought will show that both of these pronouns are equally the objects of the preposition between. You happens to be the form used for both the nominative and the objective case, but I is the nominative and me is the objective form for the first person singular. The object of a preposition is in the objective case.

Another example correctly written follows:

The firm gave a bonus to Watson and me.

Assumed Subject of Infinitive.

WRONG: Who do you wish to be your representative? RIGHT: Whom do you wish to be your representative?

In its natural order this sentence reads, "You do wish whom to be your representative." The object of the verb do wish is the whole expression, whom to be your representative. The only verb in this objective phrase is to be, an infinitive. Although infinitives differ from predicate verbs precisely in that they are not limited to a subject, this construction (whom) is called the "assumed" subject of the infinitive.

It is quite apparent that to be does not assert anything as true of a subject. Thus, the "assumed" subject of the infinitive (unlike the subject of the predicate verb) is not in the nominative case. It derives its case not from the infinitive but from its relation to the main verb of the sentence, wish, to which it is objectively related. The "assumed" subject of the infinitive is in the objective case. Incidentally, representative which is linked to whom by the verb to be is also in the objective case.

Object of Infinitive.

Wrong: Higher prices have a tendency to make you and I

keep our stock low.

RICHT: Higher prices have a tendency to make you and me

keep our stock low.

Both of these pronouns are the objects of the infinitive to make and require the objective form.

Case of Apposition.

WRONG: I work for that man, he who was made chairman. RIGHT: I work for that man, him who was made chairman.

He is wrong and him is correct because him is in apposition with man; that is, it means the same thing as man. Man is in the objective case, object of the preposition for: Although, in general, a pronoun agrees with its antecedent in gender and number but not in case, a noun or pronoun in apposition with another is in the same case as that other. Him is the objective form.

The Possessive Form.

WRONG: The companys offices have been moved. RIGHT: The company's offices have been moved.

The apostrophe has incorrectly been omitted from *companys*. This noun shows possession. Therefore, it is in the possessive case. The formation of the possessive case of nouns is somewhat irregular.

Below is a list of nouns in the possessive case both singular and plural.

SINGULAR workman people director brother Burroughs	SING. Poss. workman's people's director's brother's Burroughs'	PLURAL workmen peoples directors brothers Burroughses	PLURAL Poss. workmen's peoples' directors' brothers' Burroughses'
Burroughs wife	Burroughs' wife's	wives	wives'

SINGULAR SING. Poss. maid-of-all-work maid-of-all-work's attorney-at-law attorney-at-law's lady's lady

PLURAL maids-of-all-work maids-of-all-work's attorneys-at-law attorneys-at-law's ladies' ladies

PLURAL POSS.

Which—"It's" or "Its"?

Wrong: The corporation lost it's case. RIGHT: The corporation lost its case.

The possessive form of it is its. It's (with the apostrophe) is properly used for a contraction of it is, as:

It's after five o'clock now.

The Noun Linked to the Gerund.

LESS EXACT: Are you sure of him being solvent? More Exact: Are you sure of his being solvent?

Being is the verbal noun form called the gerund. It is modified adjectively by the word which precedes it. It is generally agreed that the possessive form for the noun or pronoun which is linked with the gerund gives the more exact meaning to the expression.

However, where the emphasis, without question, comes on the noun or pronoun instead of on the verbal form ending in ing, as in the sentence:

I found the office force watching the parade.

the word ending in ing, watching, modifies the word force and therefore has an adjective or participial nature in contrast to the substantive (noun) character of being in the sentence given above.

Attributing Possession.

INEXACT AND AWKWARD: Do you like the book's binding? EXACT AND SMOOTH: Do you like the binding of the book? Strictly speaking only a living being can possess anything, therefore it is generally inexact and somewhat awkward to attribute possession to inanimate objects by using the possessive form.

However, many phrases are in good use which ignore the theory behind this dictum as, the needle's eye, the year's work, for conscience' sake.

Possessive Form of "Who."

Wrong: Who's fault was that? Right: Whose fault was that?

Most pronouns have a possessive form which does not require the apostrophe. The possessive form of who is whose.

Adjective or Adverbial Modifier?

WRONG: This is a *real* good typewriter. RIGHT: This is a *really* good typewriter.

Typewriter is a noun, described by good, an adjective. Good is in turn modified by really. Only adverbs can modify adjectives, so the word which modifies the adjective good must be an adverb. The adverbial form of real is really.

The sentences which follow illustrate other instances of the confusion between adjectives and adverbs.

- (a) The improved device turned out work much more quickly. (not much quicker) The adverbial phrase much more quickly modifies the verb turned out.
- (b) John is faithful; he does as well as he can. (not, as good as he can) The adverb well modifies the verb does.
- (c) That box seems uncommonly heavy. (not, uncommon heavy)

 Uncommonly modifies the predicate adjective heavy which
 follows the linking verb seems. Heavy modifies the noun box.
- (d) This principle works differently. (not, different) Differently modifies the verb works.
- (e) The chimney ought to draw somewhat better after being built up. (not, some better) The adverb somewhat modifies the verb draws.

Predicate Complement after Verbs of "Being."

WRONG: This sachet makes linen smell fragrantly. RIGHT: This sachet makes linen smell fragrant.

Smell belongs to the same group of verbs as look, sound, taste, and feel, all of which pertain to the senses. We have a tendency to believe what our senses tell us, therefore these verbs may be equivalent to the more common verb to be. When they are, the word which follows them does the work of an adjective, that is, modifies a noun, (the subject noun). The sentence given demands fragrant not fragrantly.

When the modifier changes the meaning of the verb, of course an adverb is required.

Use of Comparative Degree.

Wrong: The storehouse is the *oldest* of the two buildings. Right: The storehouse is the *older* of the two buildings.

Older is the correct form because the comparative form should be used when two individuals are being compared.

Adjectives That are Incapable of Comparison.

LESS EXACT: Our catalog is the most complete ever published.

More Exact: Our catalog is the most nearly complete ever published.

The meaning of complete is such that it, like square, round, vertical, is theoretically perfect in the positive form; therefore incapable of comparison. Although we know that practically nothing is perfect, and understand that most writers use these words relatively, it is somewhat better usage to change most complete to most nearly complete or the whole sentence could be recast:

Our catalog is more nearly complete than any other published.

Incomplete Comparison.

INCOMPLETE: He knows Boston better than he does any city

in the country.

COMPLETE: He knows Boston better than any other city in

the country.

Since Boston is a city, the sentence as it stands is illogical, the comparison being incomplete.

Correct Tense Form.

WRONG: The new office boy come yesterday. RIGHT: The new office boy came yesterday.

Came is correct because the action is meant to be represented as taking place in the past. Come is the form for the present tense.

Correct Verb Form.

WRONG: We have went over your specifications carefully. RIGHT: We have gone over your specifications carefully.

Gone is the correct form because the past participle is required to combine with have to express the present tense. Went is the form for the past tense.

WRONG: The horse *drunk* two buckets of water.

RIGHT: The horse *drank* two buckets of water.

Drank is right because it is the proper form for the past tense which is required in this sentence. Drunk is the past participle.

Simple Futurity.

Wrong: I will appreciate your efforts. Right: I shall appreciate your efforts.

Since the writer means to express simple futurity, he should remember that the first person singular and plural takes *shall*,

and that the second and third person singular and plural takes will under these conditions.

FUTURITY

SINGULAR	PLURAL
I shall	we shall
you will	you will
he will	they will

Determination.

Wrong: I am determined you will not go.
RIGHT: I am determined you shall not go.

When emphatic assurance or determination is to be expressed as it is in "You shall not go! I will too!" the forms used are the reverse of those used to express futurity.

DETERMINATION

SINGULAR	PLURAL
I will	we will
you shall	you shall
he shall	they shall

"Shall" and "Will" in Questions.

WRONG: When will you finish that work? RIGHT: When shall you finish that work?

Shall is correct because in asking questions the form should be used which is expected in the answer: "I shall be through by four o'clock."

"Would" and "Should."

Wrong: I would appreciate your best efforts. Right: I should appreciate your best efforts.

Should is required because should and would (wherever either can be used) follow the same rules as shall and will.

However, both should and would have, in addition, some

special uses. Should may be used in all persons to express obligation, condition or assured expectation:

- (a) I should work overtime tonight. (obligation)
- (b) If the order should happen to be canceled, I shall let you know. (condition)
- (c) After such extensive repairs the motor should run smoothly. (expectation)

Would is especially used in all persons to express a desire or wish, or to indicate habit or custom, as:

I would that your optimism were justified. (wish, desire) Every morning the office boy would come in late. (habitual action)

Weak Passive Voice.

WEAK: Your order is being shipped without delay. STRONG: We are shipping your order promptly.

Is being shipped is the passive form of the verb. The sentence does not tell who is shipping the order. It lacks the strength which comes from the active voice.

Split Infinitive.

WRONG: I need to immediately investigate the error. RIGHT: I need to investigate the error immediately.

In this sentence there is an infinitive verb: to investigate; it is "split" by the adverb immediately. Although some authorities condemn the split infinitive entirely, others allow it occasionally, since they believe it may add conversational tone to language. In this instance there is little doubt that I need to investigate the error immediately is preferable.

Word Used in Double Capacity Ungrammatically.

Wrong: This piece of damask is as fine, if not finer than, that one.

RIGHT: This piece of damask is as fine as, if not finer than, that one.

The word as is required after fine because one cannot make the word than serve to relate both expressions, as fine and if not finer to the clause that one [is].

We should be careful not to use a verb, conjunction, preposition or noun in a double capacity, when one of the uses is ungrammatical.

Exact Connective.

Less Exact: I don't know if that substitute will serve your purpose.

More Exact: I don't know whether or not that substitute will serve your purpose.

The subordinate conjunction if expresses condition; whether or not expresses doubt; the meaning of the writer is evidently the latter.

We should try to use a connective which expresses the exact relation between two clauses.

Which? Preposition or Conjunction.

WRONG: We cannot deliver the car on time without you drive it over the road.

RIGHT: We cannot deliver the car on time *unless* you drive it over the road.

Unless should have been used instead of without because it is followed by a clause; that is, a group of words containing a subject and predicate. (You is the subject; drive the predicate verb.) The clause must be introduced by a subordinate conjunction rather than a preposition. Without, like, and except are all prepositions which are commonly mistaken for conjunctions:

- (a) These goods faded as the percales did. (not like the percales did)
- (b) I cannot succeed unless I work. (not, except I work)

A Test in Common Errors. In the following test the incorrect words within the parentheses should be struck out, leaving the sentence in its correct form.

The errors practically cover the same ground we have just gone over.

Cross out the incorrect form within the parentheses. Be ready to explain the reason for your decision.

- 1. His explanation (don't-doesn't) seem plausible.
- 2. The injured operator wanted to (lay-lie) down.
- 3. The applicant was (sitting-setting) there an hour.
- 4. Probably I (will-shall) be able to go.
- 5. Would you pay the invoice if you were (me-I)?
- 6. (Those-that) kind of fixture is not worth buying.
- 7. The stenographer wants one of (them-those) notebooks.
- 8. (We-us) men are going to the office.
- 9. The vice-president wants you and (I-me) to see him at once.
- 10. When do you expect a (raise-rise) in salary?
- 11. The Committee composed of foremen and workmen (are-is) ready.
- 12. Many members of the Chamber of Commerce (was-were) absent from the annual meeting.
- 13. Between you and (I-me) that store will not survive.
- 14. Let (him-he) and (me-I) take turns working overtime.
- 15. (Can-may) I take extra time at noon today?
- 16. Have you ever heard or (saw-seen) this lecturer before?
- 17. (Whom-who) do you wish to see?
- 18. The mail has already (went-gone).
- 19. Their car is very different (from-than) ours.
- 20. The superintendent requires that John and (me-I) help each other clear up the shipping room.
- 21. The repairs were not (near-nearly) so expensive as we expected.
- 22. Which of these two trunks is the (better-best)?
- 23. That clerk receives his reports from you and (me-I).
- 24. (Almost-most) all of their sales letters are too long.
- 25. This batch of iron was too hard just (like-as) the other was.

CHAPTER XII

EXPRESSING EACH THOUGHT COMPLETELY

Importance of Attention to Sentence Structure. Most of the letters we get are not more than one page long, and many of them contain no more than two or three short paragraphs. Yet, in spite of their brevity—or perhaps because of it—few of them are really good examples of simple, straightforward English. Probably the greatest single aid to the strengthening of letter structure comes through better sentence building. The letter-writer should be able to use the sentence as a craftsman uses a perfect instrument.

Below is a letter put out by an adding machine company:

Dear Sir:

"Which is faster?"

If you were shown two methods of doing the same work, this is probably the question that would first occur to you. Speed means dollars and cents.

On the inside pages of this folder are shown two methods for handling one of the most tedious jobs of bank clerical work. Judge for yourself which is faster.

Yours very truly,

The three short paragraphs it contains are, of course, made up of sentences. Let us notice how these sentences are built.

Two Kinds of Words. Each sentence is made up of words of two different types or classes. The first class consists of words which express definite ideas, such as: you, two, methods, doing, same, work, probably, question, first, occur, speed, dollars, means, cents, inside, pages, folder, etc. The second class

consists of words which do not express a definite idea, but, on the other hand, connect the idea-expressing words with one another, as: of in "methods of doing"; is in "this is probably the question"; or and in "dollars and cents."

Groups of Words. The words in a sentence generally occur in groups. These groups are called either phrases or clauses. They, like single words, must subject themselves to the standards of good usage.

The Phrase. A phrase is a group of words having no subject or predicate, used as a part of speech:

- 1. on the inside pages
- 2. of this folder
- 3. for handling
- 4. for yourself

In the following sentence some other phrases are indicated:

A.B.C. dealers' can cash in' on this business' with our help and assistance' without material increase' in their selling expense'.

Some of these phrases are adjectival, since they change the meaning of the noun they modify. Some are adverbial, (1) on this business, (2) with our help and assistance, (3) without material increase in their selling expense, since they modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. The adjectival phrase, in their selling expense, modifies increase and answers the question: What kind?; while the adverbial phrases answer such questions as, When? Where? and How? Besides these common phrases there is the noun phrase, A.B.C. dealers, and the verb phrase, can cash in. All these are simply groups of words, each doing the work of one part of speech.

The Clause. A clause, however, is a group of words having a subject or predicate, used as a part of speech:

if you were shown two methods of doing the same work.

In this clause, you is the subject and were shown its verb.

A Misplaced Modifier. Generally, the modifier should be placed near the word modified. In the following example the modifier (a letter similar to the copy attached) is not placed near enough to the word it modifies (person) to satisfy the demands of good usage.

All you need do is submit the list and I will send each person named, without any expense to you, a letter similar to the copy attached.

The Dangling Participle. One of the principal errors which the ordinary letter-writer makes is to use what is called a "dangling participle." By this term is meant a participial modifier—always adjective in connection and therefore properly to be placed nearest to the word it modifies—which is misplaced.

Walking up from the station, our store is sure to be seen on the right.

In the preceding example, walking up from the station does not describe our store, yet it is inserted just ahead of it.

Idiomatic Usage in Sentence Structure. In addition to observing good usage in words, phrases, and clauses, we must know and observe good usage and, particularly, idiomatic usage in sentence structure.

For instance, in English the subject should generally precede the verb except in questions. Thus in the following sentence: "Jones bought out Smith," we understand that bought out is making an assertion which is true of Jones, not Smith. The meaning of this sentence is dependent upon placing and interpreting words in accordance with the accustomed order.

The sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. It is built on the skeleton of subject plus predicate; if it lacks either of these two it has indeed lost its backbone and is merely a spineless mass of words.

The business man is very frequently careless in his sentence structure. His so-called "sentences" are frequently not more than mere fragments, sometimes lacking a subject, sometimes a verb.

Fragments. The following expressions are taken from actual business letters, where they are treated as sentences:

A motor that increases the value of electric-driven machines -that insures consistent performance—that can be adapted to the design, and that adds to the appearance.

· At your service always.

Investment bankers who have been serving for over 60 years and will continue to serve when fly-by-night houses have passed out of existence.

Styles from the world's smartest centers of dress, the finest domestic and imported woolens available.

Subject. Let us look a little closer at these sentence essentials—the subject and the predicate. The subject of the sentence is that about which something is said or asserted by the predicate. To put the matter a little differently, the verb states something that is supposedly true of the subject:

Miss Brown gave me your name as a reference.

The verb *gave* makes a statement supposed to be true of the subject, Miss Brown.

Natural Order versus Inverted Order. Although it is natural in English to put the subject of the sentence before the predicate verb, the business writer need not hesitate to use the inverted order, the verb preceding the subject, when he wishes for any particular reason to stress a certain idea by the use of this device.

Our Mr. McCord has made mention of the very pleasant interview you granted him a few days ago. We appreciate your courtesy, as did he.

In the first sentence, the subject Mr. McCord precedes the verb $has\ made$ and the subject you precedes the verb granted. In the second sentence, the subject we precedes the verb appreciate. All of these clauses are in the natural order, but the last verb in the sentence did, precedes the subject he. This is an example of the inverted order.

Sentences Classified by Structure—Simple Sentence. Sentences may be classified from different points of view. They may be grouped according to structure into three kinds: simple, compound and complex.

The simple sentence makes one assertion. In general, it may be said to have but one subject and one predicate:

Look over your price list.

Do you sometimes tire of receiving clever letters? We do.

We received 15,000 inquiries in three weeks.

Not infrequently the subject may be plural or the verb may be plural:

All our products *are made* from raw materials produced under government inspection and *are unequaled* in quality.

However, both subject and predicate may be plural without throwing the sentence into any different classification than simple:

William Ellis and his brother, Edward, both work hard and are satisfactory in every other way.

Here William Ellis and brother are the plural subjects; work and are are the plural verbs; yet the sentence is simple.

The simple sentence is a good one for business uses, chiefly

because of the ease with which it is understood; it is not likely to be misinterpreted. Its directness is valuable in building confidence in the writer.

Compound Sentences. The compound sentence, on the other hand, consists of two or more independent statements joined by the coordinate conjunction which connects the statements; yet it is connected by the underlying idea which prompted the writer to house these two statements under one sentence-roof. Such a sentence is often unwieldy.

The following compound sentence consists of four independent clauses:

Remember the sales period, January 11 to February 14; make it a real event; start more men wearing Florsheims; increase your sales and reduce your stock.

The following compound sentence is capable of being improved by subordinating one clause to the other.

Territories are being closed rapidly; write or wire for reservations before your section is closed.

Since territories are being closed rapidly, wire for reservations before your section is closed.

Generally speaking, the business writer will do well to divide the compound sentence into its component parts, or perhaps to look beneath the surface and discover a possibility of one of these ideas being properly made dependent on the other.

Complex Sentences. A sentence which does subordinate one assertion to the other is called a complex sentence. It is indeed a valuable sentence form. It helps, as few devices do, to give emphasis to what the writer wishes the reader to regard as important, and it can be used skilfully to throw into the background those unimportant details which may, none the less, contribute to the complete transmission of the idea from the mind of the writer to the mind of the reader.

The next sentence is an example:

That all small merchants may read this message we shall publish it in the *Literary Digest* of November 6, and *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* of November 20.

In this sentence, the first clause—that all small merchants may read this message—is subordinate to the main thought which follows—we shall publish it, etc. If the writer had not subordinated one thought to the other but had chosen to express his idea in a compound sentence the paragraph would have been written: "We desire all small merchants to read this message and we shall publish it," etc.

Compound-Complex Sentences. In addition to these main varieties of sentence structure some sentences may be found to have the characteristics of both the compound and the complex sentence. They are quite aptly known as compound-complex sentences.

We feel that this is a worthwhile opportunity for some enterprising young lady and we feel that our merchandise will satisfy her in every detail.

Like compound sentences, they are not necessarily unwieldy when used by the crystal-clear thinker who is likewise a master of language, but too often they are used by a longwinded business man who "goes on forever."

Sentences Classified by Function—Declarative. Sentences may also be classified according to the work they do: first, as declarative; second, as interrogative; third, as imperative; and possibly, fourth, as exclamatory.

The declarative sentence asserts something. It is followed by a period.

Swift and Company was the pioneer in the manufacture of all animal protein fats,

Fashion and value dominate the entire collection.

Interrogative. The interrogative sentence asks a question. It is followed by an interrogation point; below are a few examples of questions used at the beginning of letters:

Will you share in 50,000 mixer sales?

Have you thought of a way to decrease the cost of winter footwear?

Will you do us a small favor?

Imperative. The imperative sentence expresses a demand or request. It is followed by a period. Below are a few closings of letters in the imperative form:

Be sure your salesmen have copies of it to show to their printer customers during the month of November.

Go to the Curtis dealer named on the attached card.

Read first the introductory pages and then study the illustrations on the pages that follow.

Exclamatory. The exclamatory sentence is generally a declarative, interrogative, or imperative sentence, uttered with such emotion as to give it a peculiar significance. It is the sentence-long interjection and is followed by the exclamation point.

Mail it today-now!

Thank you!

Classification According to Length. Besides being classified according to structure, sentences may be classified according to length. The types resulting from this classification are obvious: long, short, or medium.

It is well to remember that the short sentence and the one of average length are best adapted to business uses, because they are clear, direct and easy to unify.

The following bit from a sales letter is composed of two short sentences.

Many customers bought three and four at a time. One woman bought ten; another bought twelve.

Here three short sentences make a whole letter!

Dear Sir:

Have you visited the Studio Room of "WRR" in the Adolphus? If not—come. You are very welcome.

Yours very truly,

Possibly desiring to get a distinctly dignified tone, President Coolidge wrote the following letter in two long sentences:

My dear Mr. Lawrence:

Your making a daily topical survey of all the bureaus of the National Government grouping related activities, is a work which will enable our citizens to understand and use the fine facilities the Congress provides for them.

Such a survey will be useful to schools, colleges, business and professions here and abroad, wherever there is interest in the practical working of our government.

Yours,

CALVIN COOLIDGE

Although the long sentence can be made to flow easily and logically from one aspect of thought to another, in the business letter of the average writer it does not often do so. It is likely to be rambling and wordy; cluttered with excessive and impertinent detail.

The following sentence seems too long largely because it is not well built.

Should a definite decision be made on the design and inscription wanted on the medals, let us know, giving us the approximate quantity that will be used, and we will start work on the die, and have it ready when you send us engraving instructions for the track medals.

Revised, this passage might read:

As soon as a definite decision on the design and inscription for the track medals is made, let us know the approximate quantity which will be used. Then we can have the die ready by the time you send us engraving instructions.

Classification According to Effect—Loose. Secondly, sentences may be classified according to rhetorical structure, as loose, periodic, or balanced.

The loose sentence is one in which the thought is completely given before the actual end of the sentence is reached:

Moore Push-Pins are used for hanging up heavier things such as mirrors, heavy pictures, hall or book racks, also for clothing hooks, etc.

Although the loose sentence lacks the element of suspense and is incapable of compelling the reader's attention to the very end, it has the positive quality of natural "conversational" tone, which is, generally speaking, desirable in the business letter.

—Periodic. The periodic sentence is one in which the structure is not complete until the actual end is reached:

Should this information for any reason not meet your requirements I would be glad to assist you.

This form of sentence employs the element of suspense and does impel the reader to finish reading it. On this account it, too, has a place in business letter-writing, although its exclusive use would be tiresome.

It is well to realize that short periodic sentences are easier to manage and more effective than long ones.

Should there be any information of a special nature which you desire, do not hesitate to call upon us.

If I can be of further service to you, command me.

If I offered you a job at \$12 a day, would you take it?

Although in The Phantom of the Opera we have provided you with one of the surest box-office pictures in the history of Super Productions there are still—unsold situations in your territory.

The Balanced Sentence. The balanced sentence is one which employs elements of equal value and parallel form in such a way as to produce an evenly weighted expression.

In the following, one long clause is balanced against another:

We do have a confidential bulletin to members which goes out every week, and we also have a general bulletin which goes to members and to a fairly large number of magazines and newspapers, and other trade associations.

Although powerful, the balanced sentence is heavy in effect and certainly not conversational in tone. It is convincing, however, and sometimes, but not often, can be used very effectively in the business letter.

Variety. We all like variety. The writer should see that he commands every device to achieve it. He should utilize all sorts of sentences: compound or complex; loose, periodic, and balanced; long, short, and medium.

A Test on Sentence Structure. List all fragments that pose as sentences in the following letter. Criticize the form of it's in the second paragraph, and who in the last paragraph. What important word is omitted in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph? Criticize the use of the dash in the first sentence in paragraphs 3 and 6.

When you have completed your criticisms, rewrite the letter, giving especial attention to having each thought expressed clearly and completely.

Gentlemen:

- 1. Are Blank Roller Trays Satisfactory?
- 2. Dealers have sometimes asked this question. Here is proof of our answer—just turn the page over. This installation forms the most outstanding equipment used in this modern office. It's well arranged and symmetrical layout strikes the eye at once. There are just as many Blank Rollers on the opposite side of the steel cabinet as are visible in the picture. A beautiful installation.
- 3. Opportunities such as this are in every up to date city—yours. Blank Rollers took this order against competition by every known make of tray. Where this has been done here it can be done in your town. Like every thing it takes energy but the product itself helps you out.
- 4. There are no trays which open ready for posting in one operation and close the same way. No other trays have the roller bearing follower block which never sticks. No other trays offer the same protection to ledger sheets.
- 5. The appearance is there too. Duco finished with a modern air brush like your new car. Sturdy construction of heavy cold rolled steel.
- 6. A live salesman—jumps at exclusive points such as these. Show them to your men.
- 7. For further help we will imprint this folder with a business getting sales letter for your customers that will make them look to you as the live stationer in town. The one who has the goods, the service and the punch.
 - 8. Tell us who to mail them to and they are off.

Yours very truly,

CHAPTER XIII

DEVELOPING YOUR IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

The Purpose of the Paragraph. As the message unfolds, sentences expand into paragraphs. These may vary in length, in purpose, and in manner, but they are alike in holding certain closely related thoughts together and, at the same time, separating this group of ideas from other paragraphs.

Its Length. Short paragraphs, like short sentences, are great favorites with business letter-writers. They invite the eye and tell their story at a glance.

Dear Mr. Clark:

What we're really selling at this store is satisfaction.

That's what we tried to deliver the other day when you bought clothes here.

If you got anything short of that we'd like to know it.

We're never satisfied until you are.

Yours truly,

But the short paragraph must not be overdone; nor used when there is real work to be done in order to develop the subject interestingly and seriously.

Variety in Length. It is a good idea to open the letter with a short paragraph and follow with paragraphs that are somewhat longer; since these are charged with the responsibility for driving home the point. The closing paragraph should generally be short. It should also be complete in itself, not running into the complimentary closing.

The following letter illustrates the point that variety in length is as desirable in the paragraph as it is in the sentence:

To Our Motoring Friends:

Have you ever hunted tigers?

If so, you know the track the tiger leaves on the trail and recognize it as the symbol of the well-nigh unbreakable grip he gets on anything he clutches, be it road, tree or prey.

Also you will recognize in the roadmark of the Michelin Tire something of this same unbreakable grip.

The Michelin Tiger Grip Tread!

Here is the greatest protection against skidding that any tire has ever offered. That may not sound so important as you read it here—but when the road is slippery with rain, or slushy with mud, and you see the car ahead slide from side to side while your own rolls on as steady as a deacon—well, that's the time that real non–skid protection seems mighty valuable.

You can have it without extra cost. Fortunately we have a distributor's contract with the Michelin factory that enables us to sell Michelin Tires at the price of ordinary makes. Will you fill in the enclosed card and let us quote you on your size? We know it will pay you.

Yours truly,

The Topic Sentence. How can the paragraph be held together? The most common means to insure coherence is the topic sentence. This is a sentence whose scope is broad enough to take in the main purpose of the paragraph. It is generally put at the beginning to make it easy for the reader to grasp the thought as it exists in the mind of the writer. But, sometimes, in the role of a summary, the topic sentence appears at the end of the paragraph and states the writer's conclusions. The last paragraph in the foregoing letter is held together by the topic sentence, which appears at the beginning.

Occasionally, the writer is confident that he can bind the paragraph together without the use of a topic sentence. Then, instead of expressing the topic, he implies it by greater concentration on the task of relating each sentence closely to those which may precede and follow it and in this way he gives additional variety to his paragraphs.

Methods of Developing the Thought of a Paragraph—Repetition. All paragraphs represent expansions of the central thought. Sometimes this is expanded by repetition, that is, by repeating the thought—perhaps the topic sentence—in different words or by looking at the same thing from different angles.

Why not let your dreams come true? Why not sail away to Europe and leave dull care behind? A vacation abroad now costs little more than the old routine vacation at home.

At last The Allen Plan applies to Bermuda! Just as we have saved money for thousands of European travelers we now are able to save money on your tour to these tropical islands.

The words Deko-Art may not be new to you, for news travels quickly through the trade. But it will be news to you and very good news, we believe—that these novelty shoes are ready in stock, for quick shipment on receipt of your order.

Remember that Deko-Art is brand new Your customers who want new styles while they are new will be watching your window for these shoes.

—Comparison. Paragraphs are also developed by comparison; the writer may compare things that are alike, giving the reader the interest of coincidence and similarity, or he may compare things that are different, and thus provide the impressive element of contrast.

The first of the following paragraphs compares things that are alike; the second, things that are different:

THE ALLEN PLAN has now made it possible for you to go to Europe. Note the surprisingly low cost, and remember that all hotels are high grade. Making up your tour is as easy as setting up a sectional bookcase. You may add together as many as you choose of these short tours, or any part of them, and the same low prices will prevail.

Here is a wonderful vacation tour away from the cold and slush to tropical climate for a much lower cost than has ever been offered before,—and everything throughout is first class.

Dilating on the Point—Rolling a Snowball. In some paragraphs the writer seems to start with a kernel of thought and "work out from" the center, discovering and bringing to the attention of the reader a view of the interesting byways that lead out on all sides.

Which would you rather do, sell ten packages of ice cream at a profit of 2c per package, or thirty packages of ice cream at a profit of 1c per package? The point is this, the long unit profit always looks good when figured out on paper but the small unit profit with volume sales always looks better on the balance sheet in the form of net profit.

Here is a paragraph on oriental rugs:

Included are beautiful Lillihans and Hamadans from Western Persia, the traditional burial place of Esther and Mordecai—and fine Mosuls from the Lake Van District. Rugs sturdy and durable. Typical of the hardy mountaineers and wandering nomads who weave them. Woven from long, thick, fibrous mountain wool, washed time and again in the swift mountain streams, then bleached under the hot rays of the tropical sun. And the vegetable dyes (so entirely unlike the cruel chemical dyes of Europe and America) not only give the rugs those soft, lovely colorings, but actually make the wool, more lustrous and durable.

Giving Examples. In some paragraphs the central thought is supplemented by illustration. It is generally more interesting to examine the actual instance than to flounder around in glittering generalities. The use of illustrations, though it can be overdone, serves to break an otherwise dull discourse.

Maybe your question was about your age—you thought you were too old or too young for LaSalle training. Yet ——

T. J. DeHaas, of Pittsburgh, at 53 after a lifetime of routine labor, enrolled with LaSalle. Today, at 60, he has his own profitable business.

Robert Pentland, Jr., of Hall, Pentland & McCall, Miami, Fla., was a clerk at 19. At 21, after LaSalle training, he became a certified public accountant, the youngest in the United States. Today, he is partner in an accounting firm which employs 15 C.P.A.'s and 30 other accountants.

Four Ways of Developing a Subject. The writer must be careful to choose the best possible form of presenting his message. There are four ways which the writer may utilize, either separately or in combination. First, he may present his message in the form of a story; second, he may bring his goods before the eye of the reader by means of description; third, he may use explanation to make a situation clear; fourth, he may persuade his customer by a sort of disguised argument to do what he and the firm wish the customer to do

Narration. When the letter-writer uses narration, he tries to interest the reader in his message by relating a story or incident that he believes will hit the nail on the head. He should see to it that the story has swift movement, and that it offers strong reasons for doing what the writer desires. He should be careful to keep the order of events of the story straight, and he should see to it that the steps in the action are arranged in the order of increasing interest. The next two letters show how one may capitalize the narrative.

"The Little Red Ball." The first letter tries to interest the reader in the story of its founder as given in a pamphlet inclosed with the letter. From the beginning, this story holds the interest of the reader, as all good stories do, until the last paragraph with its suggestion of profit for the reader's company clinches the letter by its "you-attitude."

Dear Sir:

A spare and wiry little man, Scotch-Irish, stubborn and fiery all through—well, the making of good wrought iron was a principle with him.

Somebody suggested he would have to make steel pipe or bust.

He shook his fist. He swore delightfully—it's an impressive matter of record—that he would make good wrought iron or bust.

And he didn't bust. . . .!

You'll enjoy the story. "The Little Red Ball" is an industrial drama of unusual interest and significance; the story of an age-old industry which fought a losing battle against great odds, and finally won out on sheer merit.

It appeared in The World's Work. Donald Wilhelm wrote it. You'll find a copy enclosed.

We know you'll enjoy it. Perhaps you, or your company, might even profit by it. Here's hoping.

Sincerely yours,

"Her Big Night." The second letter, sent to moving picture house managers, quite legitimately borrows the comedy of the plot of the film itself. The use of big in the last paragraph is an example of effective repetition; and the preparation to insure reader-action is adequate:

Dear Mr. Blank:

It wasn't every night that so many things happened to her. Ordinarily she led a quiet, staid existence as a sales lady at the corset counter. On this particular night she lived a life time. So they called it her "big" night. "Her Big Night" in fact.

It's a story of a double that got into trouble.

She wasn't used to show people. So she believed them when they told her all she had to do was don some beautiful clothes, appear before the audience, throw a handful of kisses, make a few curtsies in substitution for the great movie star—and receive ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS! It sounded easy.

And how she and her sweetie needed that thousand to tie the knot!

But everybody overlooked the persistency of a shrewd reporter who suspected a good story—and the star's husband—and the girl's sweetheart—and the star's lover—and the star's lover—and the reporter's assistant—and, oh yes, of course, to be sure, the STAR HERSELF.

All of whom had ideas of their own about good looking young ladies who start out to get famous over night.

Laura La Plante plays the star and the girl. In the dual role she has millions of possibilities. She accepts them all. She is again—Superb. You knew she would be. She always is.

HER BIG NIGHT IS A BIG PICTURE—GOOD FOR MANY BIG NIGHTS AT THE BOX OFFICE. AND SO IT SHOULD BE SOLD.

Sincerely yours,

The narrative is effectively used by the correspondence schools, by the moving picture producers and by the publishing houses. In fact, so general is the interest in a story that there is little danger in using narration in business letter-writing provided only that the story have a close bearing on the subject at hand.

Description—The Laws of Arrangement. Description is a very important form of writing in the business letter. By means of description the writer tries to build pictures appealing to the physical or to the mental eye. He should obey here, as elsewhere, the laws of arrangement. In description the use of what is called the "space order" is generally advantageous.

For instance, if the writer is describing a house that is for sale, he will be careful to pass from one point to another in much the same order as would be followed by the customer on the spot. To make the arrangement clear to the reader, the writer very likely will give in his topic sentence a bird's-eye view of the situation. He will then follow that general statement by those details which will enable the reader to picture mentally the object or feature which the writer mentions.

Graphic Representation. Sometimes the writer realizes that words alone are scarcely sufficient; that they are too awkward to give a clear yet brief description. He may then use some form of graphic representation—diagrams, photographs, charts, or the like. If he does this he will also take care that the written matter which accompanies the pictures is connected with them smoothly and unmistakably.

General and Technical Description. There are two kinds of description—general and technical. General description consists of giving the picture in general terms; while technical description consists in the listing of exact items of fact, generally tabulated for the reader's convenience.

In the following letter the two forms are employed skill-fully and positively—first general description; then, when interest has been roused, technical description.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is sample of the well-known nationally advertised

Blue Band Velvet Pencil

This old reliable pencil—supreme in its class—has an enviable place for both commercial and school work.

The lead is as smooth as velvet and yet very long lasting; the handsome walnut finished wood sharpens easily; the fine quality pink rubber erases without discoloring the paper;—far and away the greatest value in its class.

Made in five grades as follows:

No. 556-1 -Soft

No. 557-2 -Medium

No. 557-2%-Harder than No. 557

softer than No. 558

No. 558-3 -Medium Hard

No. 561-4 -Hard

Price-60c per dozen

The Blue Band Velvet is used by millions, and is the best medium-priced pencil made. All dealers carry the Velvet, but should you have difficulty in procuring it, send us the amount, and we will see that you are supplied without inconvenience.

At any rate the card herewith is good for another sample.

Yours very truly,

Exposition. Exposition, the third form of writing, consists in explanation. It makes its appeal chiefly to the reasoning mind.

The letter which follows was written to accompany and point out the features of a catalog that were supposed to be of particular interest to the reader:

Gentlemen:

Thank you for your inquiry for the New Edition of "Color Magic" which accompanies this letter.

Particularly observe the cover—for it tells the American Colortype story at a glance. Here you see the three primary colors blended into every conceivable tint and hue of the spectrum by means of our process.

On page 2 we show our ability to reproduce fine art. On page 3 this same skill is evident on clothing, furniture and food. Page 4 shows tone, texture and color in fabrics. The center spread will make you hungry—it is an appeal to the appetite that is so hard to get. Page 10 will show you package goods, while on 12 and 13 you will find ideas that you can use in your business. Fruit, flowers, and vegetables on page 14 are followed by difficult but faithful reproductions of leather, rubber and glass.

If you would like some forceful pieces of direct or display advertising please check the return card, noting the time that it will be most convenient to have the American Colortype man call.

Neither of us profits until we cooperate—so we hope to hear from you soon.

Cordially yours,

Accuracy and Clearness. Bearing in mind that accuracy of fact and clearness are essential to explanation, let us see what the plan of work should be in using the method of exposition. First, the facts must be gathered from whatever source is available—previous correspondence, conferences, telephone conversations, trade information sources, encyclopedias, and dictionaries, perhaps.

Then, with the facts completely at his command, the writer must analyze the problem to find out what the important points are. Out of the mass of available facts the good correspondent chooses only those that are vitally important and strictly pertinent to the matter in hand, and sets them forth correctly and effectively.

Argumentation—Logical Arrangement. In using argument, the fourth form of discourse, the sales letter-writer proceeds to analyze his subject in order to find the most important reasons that would lead the prospect to purchase the commodity, to engage the service, or to bestow his good-will.

Lest these main issues become hackneyed, the sales letterwriter may take up attractive minor selling points to develop and "argue." Sometimes the writer will reveal the analysis he has made of the product. In the first letter the reader may learn of "seven keys," "five reasons," or the like; each of which will in turn form the pivotal point of one letter in a sales campaign.

After he has selected certain ideas for development, he arranges them in that order which he decides, after careful thought, will be the most effective.

Deductive Order. If he has no reason to suppose that his reader will disagree with him, he may begin by making some general statement that is true. He will be careful to bring to bear sufficient evidence to support this statement so that the reader will wish to follow the suggestion of the writer. Such a method of developing the argument is called the deductive order.

The following letter is set forth in this manner:

Dear Dr. Goodnow:

General Principle You are particular about the instruments you use. You wouldn't think of any condition short of perfect cleanliness. Of course not.

Application

But what about your floors? Are they in keeping with the high standards set for the instruments?

Particulars

Let us again call your attention to the many advantages of linoleum installed as a permanent floor. When cemented to your wood floor, over a felt lining, you have a floor that is quiet, easy to walk upon, attractive, economical and easy to keep clean. And the linoleum in itself, by reason of the ingredients from which it is made, is germ-proof.

Request to the Reader We want to repeat what we said in our recent letter to you. You will not place yourself under obligation by permitting our representative to call with samples, prices and other information. All we ask is an opportunity to explain linoleum floors in their modern form. Reach for your telephone and call number —— now.

Yours very truly,

Inductive Order. It is more natural, perhaps, to choose the opposite way of presenting the message logically; that is, to build up the customer's acceptance of the fact and appreciation of the explanation, by adding to each detail other details, all of which support the summary statement at the end. The following very successful letter is developed inductively:

Gentlemen:

How many truckers do you employ?

How many hours of their time is spent in loading and unloading materials?

How much could you save if all this unnecessary piling and repiling could be done away with and your truckers spent all their time trucking—the work for which they are employed?

By giving this a little thought we feel you will be interested in learning of a truck that will enable one man to do the work of four or five men in much less time.

Proof. The writer who builds his sales letters carefully often proceeds to make his statements stronger by reinforcing them with proof—that is, with some sort of specific evidence, in the form of scientific report, testimonial or indorsement, or learned opinion. Sometimes these testimonials are exact copies of the hand-written letters, which adds to their power of convincing.

A certain firm which specializes in air conditioning and drying equipment offers the following proof in one of its letters:

In Dallas, Texas, you will find our system in operation in the Palace Theatre; in Houston, in the Texan Theatre. In San Antonio, the system will be in operation in the New Texas Theatre, which is now almost completed. . . .

Mr. H. N. Slater has such equipment in his fine old home at Locust Valley, New York, and we believe that he will assure you that the equipment makes his home more comfortable in the summer than any resort in which he might take refuge south of Northern Canada.

Subtlety and Restraint. No matter how strong the buying reasons may be, the letter-writer of power never neglects to develop his material with subtlety and restraint. He realizes that it is fatal in business to engage in open argument with one's clientele, to antagonize it in any way, to offend against its peculiar tastes, or to disregard its prejudices. Indeed, few good letters seem to contain "arguments"—and seldom, if ever, does a good letter-writer argue. Instead, he offers explanations or makes suggestions; in a word, he uses the art of persuasion.

Argument in Terms of Exposition. The argument in the following "Vertex" letter is strengthened by allowing the prospect to test the product. The writer here disguises his argument as explanation.

Your recent reply to our advertisement is appreciated. You will find attached a sample of the Paperoid "Vertex" file pocket.

Put the sample to immediate test in your file cabinet, transferring to the pocket the papers from one of your bulkier folders, and straightening them as you do so. This expanding pocket will prove a revelation in the handling of your correspondence. Vertical File Cabinets have been steadily improved upon but efficiency has been hindered by the use of old style flat (non-expansion) folders.

"Vertex" Pockets expand as the papers increase—no buckling, overriding or slipping down in the files. Indexes, therefore, are always in full view. This is a decided advantage.

Note the closed ends halfway to the top, keeping small papers and memos intact. The drop front feature permits ready access, allowing you to locate and remove any paper without disturbing the remaining contents. "Vertex" Pockets are made of "Paperoid," guaranteed to be 85% Rope Fibre and are lined back and front to give firmness. They will outlast many of the ordinary manila folders.

The enclosed circular describes "Vertex" Pockets more fully and gives prices. Trial boxes of fifty will be billed at the hundred rate. Five hundred or more at the thousand rate.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE TESTS FOR QUALITY

Effectiveness of Presentation as Well as Correctness. The *successful* letter is more than merely correct; it is effective. A great deal of discouragement often comes to the person who knows something about the principles of grammar, because he expects that a knowledge of what is correct alone will make his language expression perfect. It will not. Besides a knowledge of language laws, he needs practice in the art of writing.

To achieve the necessary skill in the art of writing, the writer for one thing, should study the underlying principles of rhetoric so that when he gets an idea he can express it appealingly. Compare these two expressions of one idea:

Sometimes a man feels as if he would go a long way to get a smoke.

I'd walk a mile for a Camel!

An Effective Letter. A Nebraska hotel man had an idea: that the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company might be persuaded to come to the city of Omaha over the Lincoln highway. His letter problem was to express his idea convincingly.

Of his letter, which follows, Mr. Creel himself says:

"The letter is particularly interesting in that it was the only promotional matter used, and resulted in bringing an entire convention from Fort Wayne to Omaha. In other words, the cost of securing the convention was a 2-cent stamp and stationery."

Here is the letter, phrased in insurance jargon:

Hotel Fontenelle, Omaha, Nebraska, August 9, 1924.

Mr. Walter F. Sheperd, Vice-President, Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Sir:

With an expectancy of your accepting the application of Omaha as premium city for your annual meeting, Hotel Fontenelle extends an incontestable offer of hospitality.

The city of Lincoln is Nebraska's capital, connected with Omaha by as pretty a highway as ever led an agent to a prospect. And when the citizenship of an entire state names its capital for the nation's leading life insurance company, you may be sure the company's convention will be welcomed in the largest city of that state.

At Hotel Fontenelle, the premium rate of rooms, each with private bath, ranges from \$3 to \$5 per day, single occupancy. If joint beneficiaries are named on the register and rooms shared by two or more delegates the premium rate per guest is lowered materially. All rooms have cash surrender values of satisfaction and cherished memories of thoughtful service.

Hotel Fontenelle is centrally located, completely equipped, and provides splendid banquet rooms and spacious convention quarters. It has a whole life policy of comfort, hospitality and efficiency that will be appreciated by go-getters of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company.

Cordially yours,

HOTEL FONTENELLE

(Signed on the

well-known dots)

H. F. Moore

Manager

Three Tests for Effective Quality. There are three qualities in prose writing that always hold good. You can test your letter by them just as truly as any story writer, essayist, or historian can test his composition. These qualities which you may hope to get into your letters are unity, logical arrangement, and force. You should keep in mind not only the principle which you are to apply but the unit of expression to which you are applying it. In other words, the qualities of unity, arrangement, and force ought to be obtained in every sentence, paragraph, and letter.

The Test of Unity. Unity means oneness. You should see to it that the feeling of oneness pervades and dominates each part of your text. Each sentence should express one thought; each paragraph should confine itself to one main idea and each letter should concern itself with one subject.

Applied to the Letter as a Whole. If unity were a person and could ask two questions of you, the first would be, "Does your letter contain every fact and comment that it ought to contain?" You would have to go through your letter to meet this test. Has the typist forgotten to put in the date? Has she indicated the enclosures? Have you been thoughtful enough to indicate both your own order number and your reader's? Have you given the full "story," or will your reader have to write back for further information before he can finish attending to your suggestions and fulfil your requests?

Here is a letter showing that "somebody blundered":

Gentlemen:

We have your letter of the first, which is not altogether clear to us.

We presume we shall have a letter from you by Monday morning at the latest. If we find it impossible to handle the order after we thoroughly understand it, we shall telegraph you.

Applied to Sentences. If after a critical re-reading of the letter you decide that all the essential facts have been included, you might next test the wording of your sentences. Each sentence, to be correct and direct, is supposed to express one thought only. Examine your sentences in the light of the analysis in Chapter XI. Does each actually make an assertion? Has it a subject and a predicate, or is it only a fragment?

Applied to Paragraphs. If your sentences pass muster, consider next your paragraph. To answer the first test question of unity as applied to the paragraph, the writer asks: "Does each paragraph have a really simple idea? If so, have I covered this idea fully? Have I omitted some essential facts that I may be tempted later to put in a postscript? Shall I be obliged, for the sake of clearness, to insert a parenthetical expression somewhere else in the letter?"

Glance for a moment at the second paragraph in this letter:

Dear Madam:

To all of us there comes a time when a happening of unusual importance sets our pulses dancing.

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In this paragraph there appear to be two sentences, but in reality there is but one thought expressed; hence, there should be but one sentence. Correctness would be secured by replacing the period after anniversary with a semicolon, and beginning

or with a small letter. It would be more effective, however, to combine the material which now appears in the first two paragraphs. In reality, there is only one paragraph here, because there is only one main idea which needs to be set off by itself from the other important ideas in the letter. The central idea of this paragraph would be the happening of unusual importance.

Freedom from Irrelevant Matter. Now we come to the second question which unity would ask: "Does the letter contain anything that is unessential?" Are there unnecessary words cluttering up your sentences? Have you deadened your reader's interests by carelessly repeating words and ideas. If you will cut out these useless words and phrases from your sentences, if you will go further and perhaps cross out whole sentences or perhaps omit whole paragraphs, if you will courageously follow this fundamental requirement of letter effectiveness, you will see your thought emerge from the letter page unhampered.

Examine the letter that follows and see whether it does not meet well the tests for unity:

Dear Customer:

It has come to our attention that you have not yet protected yourself on your 1926 garden hose requirements. Yet considering the steady increase on rubber prices, you will undoubtedly want to do so.

You probably know that crude rubber has very recently jumped from 72c to over 1.00 per lb.

And tire prices jumped 20% last week.

But there is one consolation—a garden hose order placed now for spring delivery will be payable May 1st At Present Prices.

Therefore; a word to the wise: use the enclosed post card—Now.

Very truly yours,

Practice Makes Perfect. The more you test your letters, the more able you will be to anticipate the tests of unity as you go along, and the fewer letters you will have to rewrite (1) because you have not selected the proper material with which to build, or (2) because you have not seen clearly what facts had sufficient bearing on the subject to be worth while including. You will learn by practice how to take your stand as a matter of firm policy, how to maintain your point of view unwaveringly, and how to bring to your reader with sureness and delicacy of touch the heart of your letter message.

The Test of Logical Order. The next challenge is that of order or coherence. The Spirit of Order asks the letter-writer: "Have you chosen the most advantageous arrangement of your thoughts?"—for a standard, logical, rational order is the chief means of making the various aspects of our thought "stick together." How can the letter-writer know whether he has done this or not? First of all let us remember that having rational minds, most of us are able to put two and two together and see that they make four. To satisfy the thinking mind the order of the facts should be logical. Moreover, since our thought habitually unfolds in constantly recurring patterns, the reader will find ease in following the well-trodden paths of certain arrangements.

The Time Order. The subject itself is likely to force the writer to decide what arrangement the letter shall have. If one is attempting to relate an event, he will naturally "begin at the beginning, go through to the end and stop." The picture of what has happened should be clearly stamped on the writer's mind so that he can unfold it to his reader without having to retrace his steps for the sake of including something which occurred previously, but which, up to now, he has forgotten to relate. But if he finds out after the letter has been written that revision is needed, he should not be content to have the letter go out imperfect.

The following *letter* was sent out by a telegraph company. In its sales message, selling telegraph service, it follows a time order:

Dear Sirs:

THE LETTER AND THE TELEGRAM

The Letter's Own Story

I'm a letter. I had important information. I was written two days ago in Chicago. A stenographer typed me at 10.00 A.M. They mailed me at 5.30 P.M. I've been on the way ever since.

It was a long trip. They threw me around everywhere. I got hit hard when I landed in the Post Office. I was afraid I would get lost, but thank goodness, I'm here.

They were in no hurry to open me because I was one of a thousand and I was only a letter. When I gave the Boss my information he was very angry. I heard him say he lost some money. I think I was too slow. But I couldn't travel faster, because I'm a LETTER.

The Telegram's Own Story

11.45 A.M. I'm a telegram—and I'm fast. Twenty minutes ago I was in Chicago. It was 11.25 A.M. then. Now I am in Boston. It was a quick trip. I didn't mind it a bit because I came by Western Union. They treated me fine here. A man took me from a messenger boy. He opened me immediately. He was looking at some letters when I came in, but they had to wait—I always get first attention.

He seemed pleased when he found out what I knew. He read me several times—and he talked about me. He said I made him two whole days' time and that he would use more telegrams. I'm not surprised. You see, I always make time for the people who use me, and I attract attention because I'm a Telegram.

MORAL

DON'T WRITE: TELEGRAPH!!

Yours very truly,

The Space Order. If the writer is trying to describe something that naturally spreads itself before the mind's eye as occupying *space* (instead of time) he will naturally choose a point of vantage from which he can see, without obstruction, the whole lay of the land; then, beginning where he thinks he can focus the attention of his reader, he will proceed to guide the reader from one point to another so that at the end of the letter the reader sees what he himself sees.

Almost everyone, probably, would like to *see* what the next letter—the first page of a four page letter sheet—lays before us. The map which is spread over pages 2 and 3 intensifies the effect. (See pages 34–36.)

Broncho riding in Wyoming. . . .

Dancing at the Canyon Hotel at Yellowstone . . . camera hunting in the Five National Parks . . . a boat trip into Canada . . . golf in California . . . visits to Chinatown in San Francisco . . . then across the line into Old Mexico . . . doesn't that sound interesting?

It's all happening on the four weeks' circular tour of the Far West by the Traveling University Club, and you have been elected to membership for two years—no dues or assessments, but lots of advantages. This four week tour is the first undertaking of this unusual club.

July 16 a special train of ten or twelve cars, diners, all-steel Pullmans, ball-room, college orchestra, carrying one hundred and twenty-five collegians like yourself will start on a tour of the Far West. All expenses are paid in advance, meals, hotels, side trips, all uninteresting details looked after for you by experienced college men. Each member saves more than \$200 because of the special rate.

You just enjoy yourself. The fact is, you have the help of more than a hundred college students and graduates to make this the trip of your lifetime. Reservations for this trip will be made in another two weeks. Send the card attached immediately for a most interesting sixteen-page booklet about this Traveling University Club. We hope you will join us.

Cordially yours,

The map inside shows you the places visited. Please send the card now!

Membership Committee.

Check Details. The writer cannot evade giving attention to details if the letter is to have ideal coherence. He reads his letter over to see whether or not there is a place for everything and everything is in its place. If not he should make the necessary changes.

One writer may find on revision that he has said something like this:

We are desirous of securing the services of one of your students to represent us at your school who is interested in earning money while obtaining an education.

The order of such a sentence does not satisfy us. A better arrangement would be to place the clause next to the noun phrase it modifies. The sentence revised would read:

We are desirous of securing the services of one of your students who is interested in earning money while obtaining an education, to represent us at your school.

Here is another example of how a sentence is improved by a revised order:

Incoherent Any position that you may place Miss Cook in, I am sure she will be a credit to you.

Revised I am sure Miss Cook will be a credit to you in any position where you may place her.

Incoherent Recent reductions in manufacturing costs warrant lower prices on "Arksafe" Elastic paper linings which are effective on all orders received on and after Jan. 1.

Revised Recent reductions in manufacturing costs warrant lower prices, which are effective on all orders for "Arksafe" Elastic paper linings received on and after January 1.

The next sentence was taken from a letter on rubber soled shoes; besides being uncertain in meaning, it is disagreeable to the ear. The sound of oo occurs five times—in shoes, insures, absolutely, sure and footing; and s or sh occurs seven times. Such repetition may be intentional but it is not pleasant:

Either of these shoes insures an absolutely sure footing. Testing the letter brings such weaknesses to the light.

Connectives as Guide Posts. The alert writer can minimize the reader's effort to understand him and follow him by watching for opportunities to use connectives as guide posts. The connectives consist mainly of prepositions and conjunctions, but more particularly we are here concerned with certain connecting phrases. To illustrate:

We did not rest there; on the contrary, we sought for still greater bargains.

The connecting phrase on the contrary prepares the reader for the right-about-face which the writer's thought is about to take.

If, instead of showing contrast, the writer had wanted to pile one bit of evidence on top of another he could have helped the reader to mentally climb with him by setting up such sign posts as: in addition to, furthermore, moreover, or not only that.

Exactness in Using Connectives. In every circumstance, the writer may find a connective that will be exactly what he wants; to make it apparent to the reader just which way his mind should go—what turns it should take to reach the goal that the writer has decided beforehand both he and his reader shall take. Unfortunately, although the business writer has many of these connectives on the tip of his tongue, he often uses them without much thought as to what they really mean. This misguidance may be worse for the reader than no guidance at all. The Century Handbook of Writing (Section 36) gives an excellent list of connectives, grouped first according to whether they are coordinate or subordinate, and secondly according to their basic meaning.

Making Sure That Necessary Words are Included. Some writers need to scan their letters carefully to see if they have left out words which they personally may regard as unimportant but which in reality contribute a great deal to the naturalness of the tone. As noted in Chapter II, a letter-writer sometimes shrinks from using the first person pronoun, with the result that his misguided modesty makes his English appear unnatural and incorrect. In the following sentences, taken from actual business letters, the omitted words have been inserted in parentheses:

(A) price list accompanies (our) catalog.

(We) received your post card.

(We) have an attractive proposition.

Drop in (at) your first opportunity.

(I) hope to hear from you soon.

(We) can use part-time representatives until the close of school.

Making Sure That Reference is Exact. Other business letter-writers are likely to violate coherence by neglecting to refer exactly to a point they have previously made or considered, when such a reference is necessary to insure the understanding of their message. All of us have seen the ridiculous errors which creep into the newspaper classified advertisements; but certainly none of us should care to have his letters, on account of a similar mistake, go the rounds of a highly amused group of clerks!

But to take the matter of exact reference from a different angle—note that in the following letter the writer keeps his eye on the port he is making. Realizing that he should impel the reader to do likewise, he refers to his exact aim frequently. In each sentence and paragraph he focuses the attention of the reader on the point to be established. Each distinct thought is expressed in a sentence by itself. Each main idea goes in a paragraph by itself where it has been expanded by contributory ideas.

Dear Mrs. Davis:

Patterns—Quality—Price. Isn't that what you look for when you buy linoleum?

You will find attractive patterns and high quality at a fair price in our Linoleum Department.

- 1. The patterns in Armstrong's Linoleum are designed by men who know the popular taste, men who are abreast of the times. They include, for instance, the lovely two-tone Jaspe Linoleum, the dignified Marble Inlaids, the gay Dutch Tiles, quaint old Handcraft designs, fresh little Matting and Carpet effects.
- 2. Tested ingredients, skilled workmen, and careful supervision in the most modern linoleum plant in the world insure the high quality of Armstrong's Linoleum. Properly laid by our modern method, a floor of Armstrong's Inlaid Linoleum will last as long as your house itself.
- 3. When you think of its beauty, of how sanitary and easy to clean it is, of how many years it will last, then you will be delighted with the surprisingly low cost of a permanent, well-laid floor of Armstrong's Linoleum.

Won't you come into our store the next time you are shopping, and let us talk over the floor problem? Our line of Armstrong's Linoleum is the most complete in town.

Cordially yours,

The next letter confines itself to selling typewriter rental service. It sticks to its subject and throws a good deal of light on the importance of getting good service—it is truly a well-ordered letter message.

To Teachers of Typewriting:

There are many times when extra typewriters are needed temporarily in the school room or by the students at home. This is especially true at the start of the school year.

Perhaps the size of your typewriting class is larger than expected, but you think some of the students will drop out in a month or so and the pur chase of new machines is not warranted. Perhaps some of your students are anxious to increase their speed and accuracy by home practice.

In either case, Underwood Rental Typewriters will solve your problem.

To cooperate with teachers in encouraging home practice, the following Special Rates have been made for students:

\$3.00 for 1 month \$10.00 for 4 months

The same low rate is granted schools for classroom work.

The enclosed card will bring you the rental blanks necessary for your requirements.

Very truly yours,

The Third Test, Force. Besides meeting successfully the tests for unity and logical order, the business letter should be able to answer "yes" to the challenge of force: Has the letter vigor, energy, animation, and strength? Force is of supreme importance in a business letter, for it determines pretty accurately whether or not a letter will be read, appreciated, and acted upon.

How strong should the letter be? That depends on what you want to use it for. As a whole, it must be strong enough to do its immediate task—to collect money, sell your product, appease an angry customer, or what not; but, besides that, it must also promote that fundamental purpose of business—the

building up of a large number of regular customers whose patronage may be called permanent. One cannot tow a schooner with a piece of string, nor fly a kite with an ocean cable. So one cannot always employ the letter whose touch is delicate; nor always use a letter which is powerful. The expert letter-writer aims to use the exact degree of emphasis which circumstances warrant.

Emphasis by Position. Let us now see how one can use the laws of forceful writing to bring out certain constructive ideas, and at the same time throw certain others into the background.

First we may note that emphasis can be obtained by position. There are two particularly emphatic positions—the beginning and the end.

The Beginning. Whatever is placed at the beginning of the letter—or at the beginning of a paragraph or sentence—is likely to catch the reader's eye.

The first question the writer must ask himself is: "Have I taken advantage of position?" That is, have I placed at the beginning a word or a phrase that is worthy of being set in the limelight? If not, the letter should be remodeled until such an effect is brought about. Some first words may well be trade names which will give individuality to the product or service, and others may suggest ideas which will intensify the reader's satisfaction.

In the following opening paragraph the writer chooses to begin with the central selling idea. The effect aimed at is the reader's acceptance of *quality* as the measuring rod. If the writer puts across this standard he ought to be able to show that his goods are superior or supreme in quality—and the sale will be promoted accordingly.

Quality is becoming more and more an important factor in the choice of the materials that enter into the construction and equipment of buildings. The next example is from a letter telling a story. It begins at an interesting moment. The names of the characters stand out at the beginning because of the two single-sentence paragraphs:

Brooks was astonished.

Miss Grey, his stenographer, gave him the surprise of his life.

The End. It is likewise true that whatever ends the letter has force because it is the "parting shot." The end of the letter can be reserved for offering some reason which will induce the reader to act. It is quite properly counted on to carry force enough to clinch the sale. The letter just quoted from ends:

No money asked. Just mail the card today.

Novelty of Arrangement. Moreover, anything placed in a novel position likewise gets additional attention and force from its position alone. The writer of the following letter took advantage of three possibilities to give certain ideas the force that is derived from unusual position. First, he used the place for the salutation to say:

Stopping the feet Starting the mind

Secondly, he worked a slogan into the complimentary closing which is set off from the body of the letter:

Yours for better lighting

Thirdly, he added as a postscript:

P. S. We are as handy to you as your 'phone.

This letter is one of a series of sales letters, all of which employ similar devices in wording and arrangement to get attention. Besides, the series is run off on differently illustrated letterheads, imprinted with the local dealer's name as well as the advertisement of the product itself.

STOPPING THE FEET, STARTING THE MIND

Thus an authority on retail merchandising aptly describes the power of the show window,

True, it is the articles displayed that interest the passer-by, but what directs his attention to the window in the first place? It is the lighting effects, compelling quick recognition of the art of the window trimmer.

Window shopping is one of the great feminine outdoor sports, and much of it is done at night. It is then that many a wish is expressed, only to be fulfilled on the following day. Are you getting your share of business from these passers-by who passing,—buy? Perhaps your windows can be made to produce greater drawing power.

At your convenience we would be pleased to inspect your windows, and submit suggestions where our experience tells us you can make an improvement.

Yours for Better Lighting,

P.S. We are as handy to you as your 'phone.

Emphasis by Proportion. The second way the letter-writer can test whether or not he has placed emphasis wisely, is by seeing what he has talked about most in the letter. All of us are so much impressed by size alone that we are nearly always ready to believe that what a person talks about at length he considers most important.

To comply with the rule of force which says that emphasis can be given through proportion, the writer should check up his letter to see if the idea he has given the most space to is really the point that he wants to impress most strongly on his reader's mind. If the writer finds that he has disobeyed this law, he may remedy his letter in one of two ways: possibly by building up the main idea of the letter by adding new facts, or elaborating those he already has expressed; but generally, by boiling down, or omitting the points that he sees fit to keep in the background of the reader's mind.

The reader should feel that the main point brought out in the letter is of genuine importance to him. Such an effect can be fostered by discussing it at some length. The long paragraph in the next letter is given over to a prescription paint service, the central point of this letter.

Dear Sir:

Every year, when the time for renovation and redecoration comes, the question probably arises,—"What finish can we use that will give better results?" And it is a problem, with the hard wear given the surfaces of walls, ceilings, woodwork, furniture, etc.

There is a method, however, that is now available to you whereby through Du Pont Prescription Paint Service, "guess-work" is eliminated. The product that will give maximum efficiency is specified for each surface under the conditions it must meet. The wonderful new finish, Brush Duco, may be just what you should use under certain conditions to give you superior results. The enclosed booklet, "Paint by Prescription," should prove interesting.

Du Pont Prescription Paint Service is based upon a very careful and accurate study of the conditions of your buildings and equipment. Any peculiarities or unusual conditions are carefully noted. From this we base our definite recommendations for the treatment of the surface, the application of the material, what to use, and all other important points which should be known and followed for best results. It costs you no more to take advantage of this opportunity than to purchase so much paint and varnish without this type of service insuring satisfactory results. As a matter of fact, it frequently costs less and, at the same time, your investment in paint and varnish pretection brings you full value for the money expended. One of our engineers is available for your use, and his survey and subsequent report will be placed before you without obligation.

The enclosed card makes it easy for you to take advantage of this service.

Yours for better paint protection,

Clumsy Repetition a Defect. Repetition of a word may give either a good or a poor effect. If carelessly used, it betrays language poverty. In re-reading your letter watch for repetitions to be eliminated. Note the tiresome repetition of particular and particularly in the letter on page 183.

We are in receipt of a telegraphic request from them to ship six gross (864) additional type 652 Perfection Hot Air Heaters which is indicative of the way the trade have been receiving this particular type.

As this particular type of heater fits all models of Dodge and Hudson cars, two particularly large production cars and in addition Oldsmobile, Cleveland and Diana, it is one that is taking particularly well and seems to meet with instant favor when the dealers actually see it.

Repetition Which Strengthens. However, repetition may become a powerful way of strengthening the impression if the word repeated be worth repeating. The following letter brings on an attack of spring fever by its sunny language, and intensifies the effect by the repetition of Auguries of Spring and shines.

Dear Sir:

A round-shouldered feeling under the weight of a winter over-coat . . .

. . . Auguries of Spring.

A reticence over exposing the winter suit on a sunny afternoon Auguries of Spring.

If you have experienced any of the infallible signs of spring, visit our store.

Here the new season shines . . .

Shines in topcoat, Shines in hat, Shines in suit, Shirt and cravat.

You will find only the best goods here, but you will also find heartiness, good will and cheer, friendship, appreciation and warmth. If you want the best spring outfit from topcoat to undershirt and want the kind of wholehearted service that will leave a glow under the shirt long afterward . . .

Pull our latchstring . . . and walk right in.

Yours for a brighter springtime,

Climax. Finally, the letter should be able to meet the law of force known as *climax*, which states that every appeal used in a series should be increasingly strong. We all know that if a "good story" is followed by a poor one, the latter always falls flat. Yet, had it been told first, it probably would have been appreciated. In our letters, if we wish to present a number of reasons for owning a certain machine, we should begin with the least powerful of the reasons we believe we should present, and end with the most powerful; then we may expect our reader to give weight to all of them.

The last thought in the following letter is one that is most attractive to the reader to whom a thoroughbred appeals:

Dear Sir:

The fine mettle of a thoroughbred, the sure footedness of a polo pony. That's the Wills Sainte Claire Gray Goose Traveler.

Designed by C. Harold Wills, eminent automotive engineer and metallurgist, this car quickly took its place among the leaders in America's most highly competitive industry.

In terms of actual value and advantage to you it means the possession of superior performance, the increased esteem of your associates and the conscious approval of your acquaintances.

If you will ride with me tomorrow, or any other day soon, I can show you how easy it is to add this distinguished motor car to your "stable."

Sincerely yours,

The Force of Sincerity. So far, we have thought of definite things the writer could do to get force, but what underlies all really forceful writing is the belief of the writer in what he says. The business writer needs unlimited confidence in his own motives and integrity, in the goods he sells, and in the service his house renders. He needs to be proud of its standing and its service to the community. When his attitude toward these things is right, the reader senses the force of the writer's conviction. Such a man'- letters are forceful, largely because they are sincere.

The advertising manager of a large concern marketing kitchen-cabinets sketches for us, in the following letter, his ideas on some of the points we have covered in this chapter:

Dear Madam:

We do not claim to be expert letter-writers, but are glad to enclose a couple of form letters with the hope that they may be of service.

We do no business with the consumer and most of the letters we send to our dealers, while soliciting business, are designed primarily to pave the way for the salesman's visit.

It is important that a letter directed to a business man be made brief and to the point. Women as a rule do not receive as much mail as men and for this reason are more apt to read a long letter than a man who is confronted by a big stack of mail.

When we have an important message to put up to a dealer we try, when dictating the letter, to say what we would say were we talking directly to an individual, stating our message in as few words as possible and eliminating coined words or unusual expressions which so frequently creep into letters.

It is seldom that a form letter goes out from this office without several revisions. The first draft of the letter usually covers the proposition in about the way that we would tell the story to the customer in person. We try to set down all of the facts that we want to cover in the order of their importance.

We analyze that letter to determine whether the various points have been taken up in the right order, finding frequently that some paragraph in the body of the letter will add strength if used as an introductory paragraph.

Another rule which we follow quite religiously is to make the You in all of our letters predominate, eliminating the WE as far as possible.

Our first suggestion to any beginner would be to read every letter carefully and to eliminate every unnecessary paragraph, sentence or word that can be left out.

The hardest thing to do in business letter writing is to state the proposition clearly and forcibly in few words.

Yours very truly,

CHAPTER XV

KINDS OF LETTERS—MISCELLANEOUS TYPES

The Range of Letter Types. A lecturer in Doshisha University, Japan, wrote the letter of inquiry which follows, to a well-known leather concern. Attached to the letter are the lists it mentions, written in a beautiful English script on the thinnest of rice paper. This letter is of interest to us partly because it illustrates the letter of inquiry about which we shall talk a bit later, and partly because the lists attached offer a very interesting classification of letters.

Of the half-dozen lists enclosed, we may quote two. However, even these two lists show that there are many types of letters. Some types are so important and difficult to handle that it seems wise to devote a chapter to discussing each separately. Others may be conveniently grouped as miscellaneous letters.

In the present chapter we will consider a few of these latter types.

Gentlemen:

It is my desire to place before the students of the College of Commerce of Doshisha University specimens of business letters sent out by certain leading American firms so that they may learn modern methods of foreign trade correspondence.

As this work can only be accomplished by assistance of friends in America, I take the liberty of asking your cooperation to the extent of sending me copies of certain letters which would otherwise be destroyed when they have served their purpose. The enclosed is a list of specimen letters that I am endeavoring to obtain.

I shall greatly appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Yours very respectfully,

CONTRACT

Market inquiries

Quotation or offer

Firm offer

Offer without engagement

Offer on approval

Offer on sale or return

Counter offers

Letter to secure a better price or terms and conditions

Revocations of offer

Order

Cancellation of order

Granting request

Refusing request

Confirmation

AGENCY

Proposal to act as New York agent Refusing the proposal

Accepting the proposal, giving terms

Final acceptance of terms

Proposing renewal of contract

Refusing the proposal

Announcing rescission of contract

Acknowledgment

Requesting Agent:

Settlement of a dispute with customer

Disposal of goods refused by customer

A report on a district as a market

Replies and a report

Form letters to agent—educational type

Letter to control resale price

Letter to effect co-operation on the part of local agent

Letters to agent as to change of price

Letters of Inquiry—to Whom Addressed. The letter from Doshisha University is a typical letter of inquiry.

Such a letter is presumably written to a person from whom we have the right and reasonable expectation of obtaining the information. A prospective employer may inquire about an applicant's record in a previous position. A credit manager may inquire about the desirability of credit risk. A professional man in business, such as the mechanical engineer or chemist, may properly ask the opinion of another expert in his own field. A reader of an advertisement may ask for an explanation of the construction or operation of a product.

But the fact that we know a certain person could help us is not sufficient excuse for asking him to do so. In addition, we must believe that he is likely to have an interest—perhaps unselfish or benevolent—in attending to our request. In a word, the one who inquires should not be intrusive or impertinent.

"Reader Economy." Nevertheless, the letter of inquiry if written at all should be written effectively—that is, it should draw as satisfactory an answer as possible, with as little expenditure of effort on the part of the one who answers as is consistent with a satisfactory answer.

First, it is well not to ask too many questions in the same letter. Moreover, each question should be so worded that the reader will have no difficulty in understanding what is meant. Otherwise, the reader's and the writer's effort may be wasted.

It is courteous to provide an easy means of answering and a self-addressed envelope when the reader is not expected to obtain any advantage from the inquiry.

If the information asked for ought to be kept confidential, the reader should be assured by the writer that it will be properly safeguarded. It is generally well to specify the reason for which information is needed, both for the sake of interesting the reader in the problem and to enable him to select facts and material which may well be expected to serve your purpose.

A Letter Which Meets Requirements. The following letter of inquiry fulfils practically all these demands:

- 1. It sets off the name and address of the person in question; thus giving the subject emphasis by position.
- 2. It gives the reader pertinent information as to the purpose of the inquiry; so that he may be guided as to what to write.
- 3. It assures the reader that his reply will be treated as confidential; so that he can afford to be frank.
- 4. It offers to return the favor; thus introducing the element of courtesy, besides giving the reader a motive for answering the letter.
- 5. It furnishes in the questionnaire an easy means for the reader to reply.
- 6. It encloses a stamped envelope in the interests of courtesy and economy.

Gentlemen:

We are considering the application of:

James Otis 4500 McPherson Avenue St. Louis, Missouri

for a position of salesman with this organization and wish to verify his statement regarding his experience with you.

We shall greatly appreciate your courtesy in cooperating with us, and assure you that the information you furnish will be held in strictest confidence. We shall be glad to reciprocate at any time, because it is only by such cooperation that progress can be made in the interchange of personnel information.

To assist you in furnishing this information we have prepared the attached questionpaire, which we request you to fill in.

A stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience in replying.

Very truly yours,

Inquiries May Lead to Orders. But often a firm actually tries by its advertising to pull inquiries which as "leads" are followed up consistently, for they are second only to orders themselves in appealing to the self-interest of the firm to whom they are addressed.

Buying Letters. Since the inquiry often does lead to the order, it is practical at this time to consider how the order may best be written up when the customer, for one reason or another, decides to embody the order in a letter. Let us concede, without hesitation, that the order blank as enclosed in a catalog or as a form used by the purchasing agent is efficiently taking the place of the buying letter. Nevertheless, a great many buying letters are written by individuals who have no order blanks available.

The object of the letter is to obtain goods which are generally satisfactory and specifically right in such details as quantity, color, size, quality, style, design, and price. Therefore, the letter should be clear, accurate, and complete.

The Beginning. The letter generally begins by saying that the writer would like the goods shipped at a certain time in a certain way:

Will you please ship the following order by freight at you earliest convenience:

If a list of the goods follows, the final punctuation mark of the first paragraph is a colon.

Arranging the Items. The items of the order should be arranged in as orderly a manner as possible. The quantity should appear first, followed by a description of the goods with or without the price extended at the right. The description of the goods is perhaps indicated by the use of catalog numbers, but it should be unmistakably clear in every essential detail. Each succeeding item should be tabulated beneath the first.

The descriptions of the items should not be allowed to extend far enough to the left to interfere with the quantities, which alone should occupy the left-hand column.

> ½ dozen LA Skates—size 9 1 gross heel straps—20" 1 dozen Junior Canadian hockies

Arranging for Payment. The last paragraph of the buying letter should mention the arrangement for payment, either stating that the money order or check is enclosed or requesting the amount to be charged to the account; or if the buyer desires to open a new account, giving bank or trade references. The last paragraph may possibly ask that the goods be sent C.O.D., or instruct the seller to draw on the customer.

It is well to keep a copy of the buying letter against which to check the incoming goods and the bill.

Since the buying letter is going to a person who is essentially interested in its contents, its tone need only be clear, courteous, and concise.

A Sample Order Letter. The following letter is a sample order for a carload of flour:

Gentlemen:

Please ship, December 15 or about, to:

Order Washburn-Crosby Co., Boston, Mass.
No. 9 House, Boston & Maine Railroad Delivery,
Notify—John Doe, 200 State St.,
Boston, Massachusetts

25-Bbls.	Wood		Gold	Medal	Flour
1700-24½s	Paper	sacks	66	66	66
320–12s	î	66	66	66	66
200–5s	66	66	"	66	66
20-98s	Cotto	a "	66	66	66

Applying on their purchase of October 15.

Arrival Draft,—Payable at the Second National Bank, Boston, Mass.

Letter of Introduction. The more successful the business the greater the number of friendly contacts which seem to require recognition. Out of the many occasions for the friendly letter in business we shall briefly discuss a few. The first of these is the letter of introduction.

The letter of introduction should present the bearer to the addressee, and, in addition, may carry a brief statement as to who the bearer is and what business takes him to the city where the addressee lives. It should also intimate what the business purpose of the introduction is. It may possibly not be addressed to anyone in particular but begin simply "To Whom It May Concern."

The writer should be aware that as there is a possibility of this letter becoming a legal guarantee, a great deal of importance is attached to the wording. The tone should be courteous but circumspect.

Dear Baker:

This will introduce to you Miss Nancy Hill, who has done some mighty fine work in multigraphing salesmanship for the ABC Company.

The multigraphing orders are mostly so small that they do not give anyone of her ability as good a chance as she should have, so she is anxious to try something giving her a better chance; much to our regret except that it is probable she can do better in a wider field.

It occurred to me that you might be able to advise Miss H in some way. She is a highly-talented writer, and has some splendid advertising ideas. Any introduction or the like you might be able to give her will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

P.S. With the chance she's had here in the poorest season of the year, I have great faith in her ability.

It is good practice for banks to write two letters; one, giving details regarding financial responsibility and samples of the client's signature, to be forwarded to the correspondent bank; the other, in very guarded language, to be given to the individual.

Letter of Recommendation. The letter of recommendation is designed to give certain definite facts about the person recommended as the writer knows them from his own firsthand experience and knowledge. It is generally written for a person applying for a position.

It may be a general letter addressed: "To Whom It May Concern," but, since such letters are generally prepared with the knowledge that the applicant will see them, they have no great value as frank expressions of the opinion of their writers. When one is seeking a position it is a better plan to give the name of one's references to the prospective employer, so that the latter can himself ask for a special letter of recommendation.

Facts and Opinion. The facts included in a recommendation letter should show who the applicant is, how long he has been known to the writer, what his duties have been and what bearing his experience with the writer will have upon his qualifications for the new position. Besides facts, the writer is entitled and expected to express his opinion of the applicant's character, work, personality. The writer should be both accurate and clear, not only for the sake of protecting the prospective employer, but also in view of his own reputation. Where it is difficult to recommend the applicant whole-heartedly, but where his character and diligence have been above reproach, it is both ethical and expedient to say the best that can be said honestly and to leave unsaid those things which are unfavorable.

Restrained Language Advisable. The letter of recommendation is made strong by being restrained rather than gushing, by giving specific instances, by language which is not only free from stilted expressions, but also shows the refinement and high standards of the writer, and by the expression of the writer's willingness to give further information upon request.

The following letter is enthusiastic yet does not lack definiteness:

> 100 Boylston Street Boston, Mass. April 14, 1928

Dear Mrs. Blank:

It gives me great pleasure to make my contribution to your records of commendation on Miss Sullivan.

Her drawings impressed me as having considerable individuality and fashion sense. In work done for a client of mine, she showed a grasp of detail and a business understanding of time limitations unusual in a young artist!

Some of the patterns having been changed during the course of the job, she exhibited a willingness pleasant to encounter, to make the necessary alterations within the time limit originally set.

Another promising indication is the stick-to-it-iveness shown in her stay with —— Company for practical application of color work.

The neatness of her work is a reflection of personal neatness always desirable in an office employee.

As the daughter of a very charming mother, she should develop valuable qualities of poise and personality to stand her in good stead in an executive capacity.

Very truly yours,

The Letter of Inspiration to Salesmen. The letter of inspiration is one which the sales manager is called upon almost every day to write to one or another of his men on the road. The successful sales manager does not forget that the salesmen look forward to receiving responses to the frequent reports which they are obliged to send back to the office. They want to know how they stand—how they are succeeding compared to others doing the same work. He knows how hungry they are for news, how eager for leads and how glad to get encouraging reports from their customers.

The letters from the sales manager should reflect his appreciation of their efforts, and his sympathetic comprehension of their difficulties. Even if he cannot give them practical solutions of their problems, he should not neglect to appeal to their hearts through letters of inspiration.

The following letter strikes a note of heartiness and simplicity which the salesman will appreciate.

Dear Bob:

Congratulations on getting the Spaulding order. I know that was a hard nut to crack.

I saw Joe Belmont in New York Tuesday—and I think we can get them this year. They ought to be good for a large order now, but be sure to promise them deliveries that we can make.

Don't let Hopper's man get there first. Bob, I think you'd better skip all towns between Houston and Dallas so that you can jump into the latter as early as possible.

Don't worry about our keeping all of your customers' wants in mind. I'm backing you to the limit.

Kennedy is sending me a new list of your orders in the works tonight, which I'll mail you at New Orleans.

I know you'll take care of yourself and won't let the grass grow under your feet.

Yours cordially,

Letter of Thanks. When one is gratified by service rendered, promptness, efficiency, liberality, that is the time "to take one's pen in hand" and write a letter of thanks. If we do it at once while we are still enthusiastic, our letter will radiate our appreciation, and invoke pleasure in the heart of the reader. Afterwards, as "business men," if we *must* check up and ask, "Do such letters pay?" we can answer, "Yes, because it is only natural for a business firm to render good service to those who appreciate it."

Dear Johnson:

When we requested some statistics relating to costs, last week, we certainly did not expect you to go into the matter so thoroughly as you did.

But your study has cleared up several points that the big boss was deeply concerned about; and we are mighty appreciative of your work.

I wish I could assure you that I'd "be good and never do it again"—but I confess that in the future when I want a bit of research done thoroughly, I'll be tempted to ask the advice and help of a fellow named Johnson. May I? Thanks again.

Yours,

Carleton

P. S.

Let's get together for dinner some night early next week to talk things over! When?

CHAPTER XVI

SELLING BY MAIL

Building a Background of Special Usable Knowledge. Although, in a sense, every letter is a sales letter, there is a special group of letters designed to sell a product or service by featuring some points of sales-getting interest. These are known as sales letters.

It is only common sense that the more the letter-writer knows about the firm's policies, its product and its trade, the better sales letters he can write; for a background of facts and a breadth of understanding give him a power to make his readers see the product in their mind's eye when he describes or explains it.

Keeping the Reader in Mind, in the Sales Letter. Of course, the writer of any letter should always try to keep his reader in mind; but since the same sales letter may go to hundreds or thousands of readers, one might reasonably question how this aim could be accomplished, as the writer cannot successfully see before him as individuals thousands of readers; neither can he visualize an "average" man. Nevertheless, he can choose from his acquaintances a person who might pass as a good example of the persons who will read his letter. With this acquaintance in mind, the writer has a chance of being able to make his thousands of readers feel as if this letter were dictated by one person to another.

A Successful Appeal. That is the impression created by the next letter, which was addressed to two hundred working girls—girls like Martha:

Dear Miss-

I have a little girl—Martha—not yet six. Martha is a problem. She wants a ring, she wants a comb, she wants a coin purse and she wants a compact and a Gruen wrist watch.

Like little Martha, however, we who crave beautiful things most at the time of life when we can enjoy them to the fullest—and when they would appear to greatest advantage—are often least prepared to acquire them.

Perhaps, like my Martha, you too dearly want a new diamond or a fine Gruen watch the purchase of which you have put off because of the outlay.

We want to help the Marthas—our young ladies—to have the beautiful things they want and, to assist them in acquiring really fine and dependable jewelry, we offer to certain folks recommended to us a new purchasing convenience.

You are invited, under this new plan, to enjoy at once the ownership of that treasure you want by purchasing out of income instead of touching your savings.

Come in now and make your selection and pay only part of the purchase price. The remainder may be divided into equal parts charged to your account monthly.

It will never be more convenient for you to buy than it is now, and you really save, because it costs no more to buy this way. Please ask for me when you call because this invitation is treated confidentially.

Cordially yours,

The salesman in the home, store, or office can appeal to his customer through most of the senses. He may show the product or talk about it enthusiastically; he may be able to ask the customer to sample it; to feel its texture or to test its weight. He is not limited to one or two minutes in which to tell his story. His gestures, facial expression, and personality support his words; in many ways he can be governed by the prospect's attitude. But in the written message the writer has at his command only a handful of words on paper. On one or two pages of typing, he must marshal all his forces. Thus, from the very beginning, he must focus and direct the movements of his word-forces towards the action he is inducing the customer to take.

A certain varnish company finds that the following letter with a folder or two pulls 51% replies when sent to manual training teachers. Notice how quickly the letter gets started and how at once it takes the "you-attitude":

Dear Sir:

Would you care to try out a sample of Murphy Brushing Lacquer, the newly developed, quick drying finish for furniture, cabinet work and interior finishing? The great number of inquiries coming in from manual training schools and teachers, regarding this radical innovation in the wood finishing field, makes it clear that the interest in these lacquers is growing rapidly.

The Murphy Lacquers possess a number of important advantages for manual training classes. They are easily applied, level out smoothly, dry in a few minutes, and produce a semi-gloss finish of great beauty and durability.

If you should find these lacquers suitable for use in your classes, we should be very glad indeed to supply you with direction leaflets for all members of your classes, without charge.

If we may send you a sample can of Lacquer simply write a line at the bottom of this, "Send the sample." Stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Yours very truly,

Determining the Selling Points. The sales department is constantly trying to find out what are the strongest reasons why the public buys its products. Its experts are generally able to list these points in the order of strength; but even that point which is considered weakest should be of enough importance to strengthen the appeal to at least one type of prospect. The general sales manager shows what the good points of the product are in this announcement to dealers:

This letter announces a new sales service. There will be a total of six Bulletins—each one dealing with a distinctive point of Kerogas Quality or Service, namely:

- (1) Durability
 ... The lasting construction of Kerogas Stoves.
- (2) The Heart of the Oil Stove . . . The Kerogas Burner.
- (3) Kerogas Economies
 . . . How the Kerogas Burner Stove Saves Time . . . Kitchen Space . . . Money. Oil Economy with Gas Convenience.
- (4) Kerogas Safety.
- (5) Kerogas Conveniences that Appeal to Every Housewife.
- (6) Advertising and Dealer Helps.

Every sale means liberal profit for you with another lasting booster and customer for the store. What a big opportunity for more sales with Kerogas!

We are confident that these bulletins will be a big help to all interested in mastering the essential selling points to prove that "Kerogas does Surpass."

The sales correspondent may select one of these arguments as the central feature of any particular letter, (as the foregoing company has determined to do in its bulletins) and then he may use some of the other points to intensify the pulling power of the letter as a whole. Without relying solely on any given point to sell the product to all prospects, he must know how to give the most important idea the greatest emphasis.

The Steps of a Sale. Since the letter is the company's sales representative it must, to get the best results, use methods similar to the salesman's. Both the salesman and the sales letterwriter try to get favorable attention, to create interest, to stimulate desire and to get action. But they are not misled into thinking that any of these four aims can be successfully confined to any one portion of the letter; on the contrary, one and all pervade the whole letter.

Attracting Favorable Attention. Nevertheless, the sales letter-writer knows that though you can lead a horse to water you can't compel him to drink; the writer must first attract the favorable attention of the reader before he can proceed to tell him anything about the product; so he looks around for something with which to attract favorable attention at the very beginning. Someone has well said, "The opening of the letter should be like a handshake." Surely when we are introduced to a person who makes a favorable appearance, we have an expectation that the words of introduction will lead easily and spontaneously into conversation that is pleasant and perhaps valuable. If it is to do so, there is no time to lose; someone must decide immediately what to say, and say it. The letter-writer, too, must decide what to say. He has, to be sure, quite a little leeway: he may tell a story:

I stepped into one of the large loop banks on La Salle Street the other day at closing time to see a friend of mine. To see cigars come forth from the pockets and drawers, to watch the quick puffs of deep appreciation, taught me when a banker enjoys his smoke most.

He may announce a bit of news:

Over 4000 individual advertisements of products sold to industry were exhibited last month at the Annual Convention of the National Industrial Advertisers' Association held in Philadelphia.

And for the best use of color in advertising the First Prize was awarded to Jenkins Bros.

He may ask a question:

How would you like an attractive rubber mat at your front door, with your firm name, trade mark or street number inlaid in white, red or black letters?

If you could reduce the clamor of your gear- rains—which now bring on nervous fatigue with consequent loss of efficiency—wouldn't you do it?

Whatever he chooses, however, as the means of establishing the contact, should be something that is very closely tied to the message which follows at its heels.

Use of Headlines. One device the sales letter-writer has learned from journalism and advertising: most folks read the headlines. Some good letters now use headlines, too, without losing the "letter look" on that account. In these circular letters, the headlines take the place of the salutation and inside address:

Would You Pay 2c for A Specialist's Advice?

That is all our advice ever costs anyone. We are specialists in illumination and are assisted by the illumination Bureau of the Westinghouse Lamp Company.

· MEN AND MOTHS ARE ATTRACTED BY LIGHT

You don't care so much about the moths, but you depend upon the men and women you attract to your store, to increase your daily receipts, turnover, and success as a retail merchant.

Holding Attention. Attention is easier to attract than it is to hold; every gap in the mental process affords a loophole through which it may escape forever. For an instant only, the eye can be held in favorable attention; then, if the interest is not captured, the reader's mind, like a butterfly, wings away to another flower of its fancy.

The letter should appear at first sight to be related to the reader's needs and desires; then he is willing to give it his concentrated attention. When this happens the "contact" between the writer and his reader has been established. It should not be broken until the reader has finally taken the action the writer wishes him to take. Thus the contact of the letter attracts favorable attention, starts the sales process flowing smoothly and rapidly and makes a positive contribution to the letter as a whole.

The following letter from a credit corporation, directed to the "Attention of the Treasurer," gets down to hard pan without delay:

Gentlemen:

We would like to show you how:

you can make profit on installment sales in addition to your usual cash business;

you can safely increase your sales with this additional outlet;

you can leave your bank lines undisturbed.

We all are inclined to find a way to secure an article which we desire. Before we decide to buy a thing we must desire it. But before we desire it, we must know enough to appreciate its value. Description and explanation are ways of throwing the product into a favorable light.

Words with Emotional Appeal. Perhaps among the army of words in the service of the writer are some powerful enough in their emotional suggestion to give the reader an impetus not only to feel favorably, but also to act favorably—in a word, perhaps the writer knows how to persuade people—perhaps he knows how to rule his little world by tugging at its heart strings.

Some persuasive material awakens memories of boyish pranks and dreams endeared by a thousand associations to manhood. No wonder that these recollections put the "boy, grown tall," into a benevolent mood and make him receptive to any suggestion with which they seem to be naturally associated.

The following letter is addressed to advertisers in *The National Sportsman*, with the object of selling space in the Christmas number:

Dear Sir:

When the Boy Who Has Not Yet Grown Up is safe asleep—and the Grown Up Big Boy is comfortably settled down with his National Sportsman Magazine, in the big easy chair within a circle of warm firelight—when he is contemplative, and at peace with everything—easy, genial, smoking his good black pipe—then is the time to call him back to his boyhood—to suggest the pleasant surprise of the things that made his boyish heart beat faster Christmas times, and things that will make the heart of his own little boy beat faster when he climbs down from his warm bed Christmas morning.

Let's get together, you and I, and bring the thought of a gift into the glow of this fireside mood; into the thoughts of these Grown-up Big Boys and so into the lives of the Grown-Up Big Boys' little boys.

Come, send Santa Claus a-whispering to willing and thoughtful ears this Christmas time; speak through the friendly voice of the Big Boy's Book, the Christmas NATIONAL SPORTSMAN.

Sincerely and cordially yours,

The Christmas Forms close November 10th—won't you send in your copy by return mail so that we can give you the best possible position to catch the Big Boy's attention?

Do you see what the writer of the letter has done? Through an appeal to childhood memories, he not only reminds the advertiser that he can interest the father, as "the Grown-Up Big Boy" by recalling Christmases of long ago; but, at the same time, the writer actually draws the advertiser himself into compliance with his suggestion to "send Santa Claus a-whispering."

some

pebbles

"A Recipe for Preserving Children." The following is part of a successful business letter from a social agency. It succeeded in opening the hearts and purses of a number of men and women who remembered from their own childhood how wonderful fields and brooks, and small dogs are; and how necessary to happiness are side shows and pink lemonade.

A Recipe for Preserving Children

1 grassy field 2 or 3 small dogs 2 doz. children 2 pinch of brook

Mix the children and the dogs well together and put them in the field constantly stirring. Pour the brook over the pebbles; sprinkle the field with flowers; spread over all a deep blue sky and bake in the hot sun. When brown, remove and set away to cool in a bath tub.

Stifling summer days treble our responsibility as the agency of the Church in mending broken child lives. Winter, curiously, is the period of generous giving. Tragedy and misfortune walk hand in hand in July as well as at Christmas. Will you befriend the children in our care?

The next letter touches one of the deepest problems of parents, especially those who live "on the farm": how to keep the young folks contented at home. The message and the illustrated letterhead both have remarkable pulling power:

Dear Sir:

There is no home quite so happy—

As that home where boys and girls are growing up to young manhood and womanhood—content to live and work on the farm—putting their hearts and their strength into their labor—because it is home.

It is worth while, isn't it, to make the farm home so attractive and to make the working conditions so pleasant—that there will be no temptation for your boy or your girl to leave the farm, for a pleasanter job in the city.

That's what Delco-Light does—makes living conditions in the farm home as pleasant as they can be found in the city—and takes the drudgery out of the work about the farm home.

Ask us about Delco-Light and how it will help to make your home the most attractive place in the world for your young folks.

Sincerely yours,

Reassuring the Reader. The writer who bears in mind how much easier it is to repeat a habitual action than to take a new step, may overcome his reader's natural resistance to the new by showing that after all the action suggested is similar to other actions that the reader has taken before and found beneficial.

How carefully this next letter introducing a new service feels its way along! Both of the emphatic positions, the beginning and the end, are utilized for matter designed to promise the reader that he need not hesitate to act. It assumes that he really wants to know more about an ideal little home; that his desire merely needs to be awakened as one awakens a sleeping child—gently and reassuringly.

Dear Mr. Blank:

Suppose a friend of yours, who, for more than twenty years had made a careful study of planning and building high grade homes, offered to help you, free of charge, with the building of your new home. Chances are you would accept the offer without a moment's hesitation, and why? Because, like many others, you may not be familiar with all the important points about building and, quite naturally, welcome all the help you can get.

Have you ever considered that Sears, Roebuck and Company is just such a friend and has offered to help you to get your new home? And yet you haven't accepted our invitation to see our exhibit and to use our Home Builder's Free Information Bureau. Perhaps it's because you feel that you would be putting yourself under obligation or that you would be bothered by our salesmen. But you wouldn't be.

It really doesn't matter if you never spend a penny with us. After all, we often serve ourselves best by serving others. We'll be satisfied just to know that you saw our exhibit and thoroughly understand that "Honor Bilt" Homes are high grade permanent buildings, that are being built every day in our most desirable suburbs.

Why not call at our exhibit some day this week; or, perhaps, some evening would be more convenient? If you will simply telephone or write me just when you are best able to call, I'll make it my business to be here.

Please remember, you won't be putting yourself under obligation in any way whatever.

Finding a Motive for Action. Somewhere along the whole range of feeling—among the latent impulses to eat, to fight, to worship, to be like the other fellow, to keep clean, to seek comfort or sympathy, to be social, to build, to play, to enhance personal charm or sustain personal pride, there is a motive strong enough to get action. The writer who understands men and women can find a fuse and light it. The sale follows.

Here is an effective appeal to a farmer who knows well enough that *he* himself "works from sun to sun." This letter reminds him of the rest of the old rhyme, that "a woman's work is never done." What about the labor-saving equipment his wife needs?

Dear Sir:

When you were laid up that day the chances are you were amazed at the work your wife had to do.

You didn't wonder that she is so often completely exhausted at the end of the day, too tired even to relax.

Electric light and power in your home won't do all the work your wife does now, we admit.

But it would make the hardest work a whole lot easier.

Electric power, from the Westinghouse unit, would make washday 50% easier at least. It would do the washing, rinsing and wringing almost automatically. And think of the carrying saved when there is running water at the tap.

On ironing day an electric iron makes cooler work and saves many steps. An electric fan in the kitchen while ironing and cooking dispels that exhausting summer heat.

Cleaning is almost play with an electric suction sweeper.

All of these appliances, and dozens more, are made possible even for isolated homes by the Westinghouse unit.

Your wife would perhaps like to see this plant demonstrated and be sure that she too, can easily operate it. We'll gladly bring it around, without obligation, any day you set.

Sincerely yours,

Appeal to Reason. Some folks are easily moved by emotion, others by reason. Some products can be sold by an appeal to feeling, others are sold by an appeal to the intellect. The writer may realize that before a person can see the value of his product, some particular uses for it will have to be explained, some powerful reasons mustered. Likewise, the reasoning process is the one to use where the customer can be shown gains to be made or money to be saved:

Dear Sir:

You buy gelatin by the pound; but on what basis do you pay for it?

When you buy gelatin, you pay a definite amount for what its jelly strength or stabilizing power will accomplish. We recently perfected a high grade product which possesses a jelly strength greater than any

gelatin you have probably ever used.

We believe that you want to make your own test of this "high power" gelatin, so we are enclosing a card which will bring a sample to your factory. Mail the card, test our sample, and then sit down and figure your gelatin costs. You will say this was the most profitable post card you ever mailed.

Yours respectfully,

The "Reason-Why" Approach. If we wish to appeal to the reasoning mind, we must know how that mind works. Regardless of our language style we must follow the reasoning process that satisfies.

There are certain relations that exist between the commercial commodities and consumers' needs, but there is none so strong as cause and effect. Hundreds of sales letters show why goods are better; why they can be priced lower; why they can be operated more economically. Therefore, tell the reason why. In doing so, keep in mind who the reader is; how much he already is likely to know about your product; what else he needs to be told; and, lastly, how you can encourage him by an attractive arrangement of words to deliberate long enough on each word and phrase to understand its bearing on the central idea.

Providing a Yardstick. Before a company can sell a new product, it has to educate its possible consumers to accept it. They will neither desire it nor tolerate it until they measure it against the old type with the yardstick which you provide. You must give them such standards that when they use them to compare your product with your competitor's they will find that yours measures full and running over. If the customer is to arrive at the conclusion that you desire, you must make sure that he accepts the basis that you assume, and then you must lead him over a mental path that will take him infallibly and directly to the goal you have set for him.

In the letter from a bond house shown in Chapter I, the standard given the prospect for measuring bond houses is reliability. Most bond buyers would accept that as the prime requisite. The letter says in effect: "If it's reliability you want—and we've told you that you do—then choose us for your investment banker."

Anticipating Objections. The sales letter-writer should learn how to anticipate and overcome the objections that are keeping the reader from deciding to go his way. Such hindrances can be effectively overcome only by fearless attack.

"Don't get us wrong on this," says the letter below. How is that for a weapon with which to fell an objection that may lurk behind the scenes?

Don't get us wrong on this, we aren't urging you to start in the shoe business, nothing of the sort. We merely mean that the boys who buy basketballs and baseballs of you would also buy Keds if you carried them. And the men who buy their guns, ammunition and fishing tackle would also buy a pair of Barker Hunting Shoes.

It will not be necessary for you to introduce Keds to your customers. They are so widely advertised and used that they are staple goods like Remington and Winchester firearms, only more so. The only selling effort that will be required of you will be to use the window and counter displays which we will send you with your order.

The Value of the Testimonial. The reader is bound to believe properly supported facts. Thus, when the writer's statement is backed by a genuine testimonial from a person whose circumstances and needs are similar to the reader's, he is willing to concede still greater weight to the argument.

Dear Sirs:

After testing out your pipeless furnace through the winter of 1924–25, I would like to tell you that I am very much pleased with it. I am used to both steam and hot water heat, but for economy and comfort your pipeless cannot be beaten.

In the early morning in the northwest room the temperature was never below 65°.

I used wood for fuel the greater part of the winter, in fact I used just one ton of coal.

Now I would like you to quote me a price on your electric automatic water system without the tank, as I have a 380 gal. tank at present and would like to take out the present pump and install one of yours.

Yours truly,

Every word of the following letter gains strength from its partnership with a worth-while testimonial:

Dear Mr. Ford:

"Nine out of ten of all cases of sickness occur in the heating season. Uneven heat, too hot or too cold—that's the cause of sickness."

A prominent physician is the author of this statement.

Don't you agree with the doctor? You know that in your own family colds are frequent in the heating season. If we had mercury in our veins in place of red corpuscles, juggling temperatures would not affect us. But we are only human—uneven heat is harmful to us.

"But what can I do to protect my family's health?" Install an ABC. It will give you abundant, unvarying heat—as you want it, when you want it.

"Health prescription." That's what the enclosed card is. Why not follow that urge and let Uncle Sam bring the facts?

Sincerely yours,

The Power of Inference. Not every point has to be proved—for some points can be established by inference. Perhaps it is well to let the reader draw his own conclusions, whenever he will surely draw the ones you want him to.

When proof consists of a record already made, the facts should be briefly and graphically presented. When, as sometimes seems better, the letter suggests that the reader himself make a test, the experiment should be very easy and pleasant to perform, and the explanation of how to do it should be clear beyond any possibility of misunderstanding. Both these types of "proof" do their work properly only when they are overwhelmingly convincing.

Securing Action. The writer measures the success of his sales letter by the response he receives. Therefore, he should give the reader something to do at once—and that something should reach the writer in a tangible form. Then he knows how much action that letter induced.

The work of the final paragraphs is to finish the resolution to act at once; not merely to build up an impetus to act. The inducement and clincher *secure* action rather than create it. After the reader has been persuaded and convinced that the thing you ask him to do is good for him, all that remains is to make him take steps to do it.

Inducements and Clinchers. Perhaps all he needs to make him act will be a little shove. It is with this thought in mind that the expert's sales letter offers an added advantage if the reader will act at once; this is why we find we can secure a ten per cent discount, if we take up a certain "offer"; why we get a premium if we send the coupon back at once; why we find post-cards, order blanks and stamped addressed envelopes accompanying the sales letter. These inducements help the last paragraph "clinch" the sale. The writer provides an easy means for carrying out the impulse.

The following clinchers ought to work:

Send the enclosed post-card, and one of our men will give you a "facts and figures" outline of what Fairbanks-Morse ball-bearing motors will do for you, or we will send data on this equipment by mail.

If you do not know TIDE, the enclosed complimentary copy will doubtless interest you. The coupon below is easy to manage.

Just telephone Dearborn 1111 and ask for an ad-taker who will assist you in wording your advertisement if desired.

Occasionally the clincher asks for the order:

You haven't nearly enough Twinplex Stroppers and Brushes for real selection and display. Look over your price list. Let us have your order before our special display material is gone. We'll see that your jobber gets credit.

Yours for big Holiday Sales,

P. S.—Order on the back of this letter. A pencil notation is good enough for us. Thanks.

A Test for Sales Letter Essentials. The following piece of copy appeared in a house-organ, "Character," some time ago. Do you think that with a heading and complimentary closing, it could be used as it is for a sales letter? If not, why? If so, prove that it includes all the elements a sales letter should:

WHICH?

On the desk of your customer this morning lies a piece of Direct Advertising fresh from the Griffith-Stillings Press. The beams of the rising sun glance across the unoccupied office and fall athwart it. There it lies, all ready to say "Hail" to the Chief.

The Chief arrives, picks up the advertisement, and reads it through. "That rings true!" he ejaculates. "This is the stuff for us!"

This business message does its work because:

- 1. It was sent to the right man.
- 2. It is so displayed that it flashes its message across instantly.
- 3. It is the right message—done in the characteristic Griffith-Stillings style.
- 4. It solves the most insistent of the Chief's needs. It offers him the right SERVICE.
- 5. It says "Hail" to the Chief, and he answers, "Hail, fellow, well

One question only, but it is a vastly important one to you: Did yo competitor mail this message to your customer, or did You?

CHAPTER XVII

FOLLOWING UP THE LEADS

Stimulating Inquiries. As we sit at home or on the train turning the leaves of some magazine, our attention is caught, let us suppose, by the advertisement of a certain product—a radio, for instance. "I wonder how much that costs" we may ask; yet we may read the printed matter in vain, so far as finding the answer to our simple and very sensible question. That is because the advertiser wants to draw inquiries; and, to encourage us to send him some token of our interest, and some indication that we have been attracted to the advertisement, he tries to induce us to clip and send a coupon.

Getting Answers Ready. After the advertisement has appeared the inquiries begin to come in—sometimes they are few and far between, but often the advertiser is flooded with them. Every such inquiry represents a possible customer; therefore each should be answered effectively and then followed up systematically. To the extent that the advertiser can foretell what questions the inquirers will ask, he can prepare answers ahead of time.

If he has advertised in the Saturday Evening Post, or any of the widely circulated magazines, that he will send a catalog on request, he will do well to have a letter all ready to go out with the catalog in response to the inquiries that are sure to come in. Moreover, if he knows from experience that his prospects are interested in an explanation of how the product works, in what sizes it is made, or any definite features of the product or service, he may be able to compose a whole letter in advance that will tell the prospect just what he wants to know.

On the other hand he may not be able to anticipate the questions. Therefore, he must be able to handle a variety of situations that may arise.

Three Kinds of Answers. Thus we see that letters of inquiry may be divided into three classes: (1) those that may be prepared completely in advance; (2) those that may be partly so prepared; (3) those that must be written entirely after the inquiry has come in.

The Unusual Inquiry. When an unusual inquiry comes in, courtesy and the spirit of give-and-take require that it be answered carefully and responsibly if it is to be answered at all.

Imposition—Getting Out of a Dilemma. Occasionally it happens that the letter-writer or inquirer has little regard for his reader's time or appreciation of the work necessary to answer the questions he raises. If the inquirer is imposing upon his reader, the reader may good-naturedly comply with his request, although it is unreasonable. Since busy people are, strangely enough, about the only persons who do find time to shoulder the other fellow's burden, most letters of inquiry receive courteous attention in big business today.

However, it often happens that the busy executive or expert is bombarded by requests for facts relating to the industry and for his opinions regarding conditions. Of course, he can't often afford the time to make a serious study for the benefit of the inquirer. He generally is willing to do whatever he can conveniently, such as sending a carbon of some special reports he has previously made for other occasions, or reprints of addresses, or advertising literature and letters. He may take the trouble to give the inquirer the names of certain publications and he may even consent to make certain experiments. As for doing everything that may be asked, that, of course, is out of the question. Whatever he does, however, he will do graciously, and although he may be unwilling to do more than is

convenient, he has the art of stopping his letter without giving offense before too much precious time has been consumed.

"Form" Answers for Questions That Recur. So much for the special inquiry and its answer. Suffice it to say that more often inquirers ask somewhat the same questions year in and year out. The answers to their letters can often be prepared in advance, through shrewd guesses as to what questions may be asked.

In order not to rely on chance or fickle inspiration too much, it is well to prepare a list of all possible questions that anyone is likely to ask; it is also well to prepare a careful sales-stimulating answer to each. These paragraphs will then be used as form paragraphs which, rather than the full form letter, often seem best adapted to the great variety of inquiries that are likely to come in.

Inserting a Personal Paragraph. The inquirer may also ask some questions that are unusual. It is, of course, annoying to the inquirer to have his questions unanswered, and equally annoying to have some questions answered and others passed over. Therefore, if he asks a question which is not answered by a form paragraph, a personally dictated paragraph should be inserted to cover the particular point. Letters of inquiry should be read by intelligent persons who can be relied upon to properly classify and select the information needed to answer them.

When a Catalog is Sent. If catalogs or other enclosures are to be sent, it is good salesmanship to send an accompanying letter which calls attention to the pages of the catalog where answers to specific inquiries may be found. If the firm has a local dealer, the inquiry should be referred to him. Since the letter of inquiry is often illuminating, the original letter should be forwarded to him. If it is desirable to keep a copy of the inquiry in the main office, a typewritten copy may be made.

Although the following letter does not refer to special pages, it is a good example of the letter that may be completely prepared in advance.

Dear Sir:

Some days ago we mailed you, at your request, our "Sunshine of the Night" catalog illustrating Coleman Lighting Systems for stores, churches, and homes.

As we have not heard from you, we wonder if the catalog was delivered. If not, we shall be glad to send another copy.

In the event you have the catalog, we would appreciate it, if you would supply the necessary information for us to make you an estimate of cost of installing suitable fixtures for your purpose. This estimate will be submitted without putting you under obligation in any way.

Coleman Lighting Systems are listed as standard by the Underwriters, and when properly installed, their use will not increase your insurance.

Your interest in better light was evidenced by your inquiry, and we hope you will take a few minutes to draw a rough floor diagram of your house, giving size of each room to be lighted, with height of ceiling and memorandum of fixtures you select—our estimate will show at what low cost a complete lighting system can be installed.

When your plant is in operation, a Coleman Pressure Range can also be installed and operated from same fuel tank, as well as our modern coil water heaters, where you have a water system.

We wish to again express our thanks for your interest in Coleman Lighting Systems and hope we may have the opportunity of serving you in some way.

Yours very truly,

Below is another letter which was sent as the second follow-up in answer to an inquiry. Although it is doubtful if the tone of the third paragraph is especially good, since it contains some negative words—wrong, can't, and worries—yet it does answer possible objections as to price and quality, and is stimulating in its attempt to get an answer. Also it does what the foregoing letter did not do—it refers to special pages in the booklet which was sent previously.

Dear Sir:

How about that order from you—the one that we haven't received?

Your reply to our advertisement was answered promptly and in detail as we supposed, quoting you prices and giving complete information—but we haven't received a word from you.

Something has gone wrong—we can't imagine what it is and it worries us.

It can't be the price—that's certain, because our prices are unusually low—they're competition-proof. Quality considered, our prices will average nearly a third and in some cases half the average dealer's price.

As to the quality, that's guaranteed. Even your satisfaction is guaranteed. If you can duplicate any article at less price anywhere else, you are at liberty to return the Smyth-Despard product and your money will be refunded—freight prepaid and all.

Yours was a 100% inquiry and we honestly want to know why we haven't had the pleasure of filling your order.

Won't you tell us frankly? We shall heartily appreciate it.

You'll be interested in reading Pages 2, 3, and 4—and after you finish reading them, kindly drop us a line in reply to this letter.

Cordially yours,

Incidentally, did you notice that the writer of the foregoing letter seemed to assume that the person who inquired was "100%" in earnest? To assume, however, is not necessarily to believe. Most firms know that a large percentage of inquiries are made by persons who are not really interested but merely curious. Therefore, the policy as to the number of follow-up letters to send may vary.

Defects Sometimes Found in Answers to Inquiries. Ordinary answers to inquiries are open to widespread criticism. To be specific—first, many do not answer the questions asked. This failure arises because too often a letter prepared in advance is the only one used in response to prospects. Instead of depending on a single letter, the correspondent should have available either a number of such letters from which to make an intelligent choice or else he should use a combination of form paragraphs and others that are personally dictated. Another criticism often made is that the answer shows that the questions have not been understood. Here the blame may be divided, to be sure; but undoubtedly, it is to the firm's advantage to probe the prospect's meaning, and if that does not clear up the question, the firm should write a tactful letter designed to get the necessary information.

Still another objection relates to the time element. The firm often fails to answer the inquiry promptly. Delay in receiving information is likely to kill the inquirer's interest, so that the belated answer is useless. On the other hand, the long continuance of follow-ups to an inquirer who has lost any interest he may have had is annoying. It may be noted, however, that the bulk of orders traceable to inquiries often come in after a dozen or more follow-up letters have seen sent out.

Keeping the Prospect Interested. Furthermore, if the firm intends to close the sale through a personal interview, it must, in the meantime, keep alive the interest and enthusiasm of the prospect. At some time during the interval between the

receipt of the inquiry by the home office and a personal call from its representative, it is well to thank the inquirer for his expression of interest, assure him that he will receive a call from a representative as soon as possible, and keep him well supplied with advertising literature.

Prospects Who Have Made No Inquiry. So far we have been considering the letters that go to inquirers; but many follow-up letters are sent to prospects whose names have been obtained in other ways. Such follow-up correspondence, of course, originates in the sales department. The letters that follow the first are also strictly sales letters. Therefore, the follow-up correspondent should be familiar with principles of sales letter-writing. He needs, particularly, to analyze the cause of his failures and to reach out into the hearts and interest of his readers to find arguments that will appeal. He must be keen to anticipate objections and clever in urging immediate action. This letter tries to make the reader feel that here is something that is good for him.

Dear Mr. Smith:

You are probably wondering just how we can help you to earn extra money. The limited space prevented our telling you more in the advertisement, but here are the details:

You know The Saturday Evening Post. Now, do you think it would be a very difficult matter to tell a few of your friends about the many worthwhile features to be found in The Post, and collect a \$2 bill—or two ones—from each? Then, there's The Ladies' Home Journal, recognized for more than forty years as the leader in the home field. There's a prospect for The Journal in every good home. And the yearly subscription price is only \$1. Besides, you have the big new monthly Country Gentleman for farmers and for those whose interests tie back to the farm. It sells for only \$1 for three whole years!

Of these three publications at least one should find a ready welcome in every home. And there are many people right in your town who will gladly join the Curtis family if only they are invited. You're to do the inviting!

Men in all walks of life are making good in Curtis work. Victor C. Rogers made more than \$300.00 in his first three months in addition to his

regular income. E. R. Durgin, a busy Wisconsin advertising man, found that selling Curtis subs in spare time during the past year netted him an average of \$51.40 a month extra. Courtright Hawley of North Dakota has just rounded out fourteen years of full time work in which his average weekly earnings have been in excess of \$100 a week.

And you have a double advantage at this time of year because you can offer your friends a solution to that Christmas question, "What shall I give?" Gift subscriptions are the ideal answer. They are easy to purchase and make very appropriate Christmas remembrances. Besides, the cost is small!

Last year a great many people ordered three or more Curtis gift subscriptions. This will give you some idea of the popularity of the Curtis Gift plan. Mr. Charles Finkel, of Indiana, earned \$86.75 in one week alone last December selling gift subscriptions. And gift subs will swell your Curtis profits, too, if you'll just go after them!

The same liberal commission and bonus offer which started these men making more money is yours for the taking. The booklet I am sending with this letter will tell you the whole story. In it you will learn how others started without experience and made a distinct financial success of this work. What they have done, you can, too—and even more easily, for you benefit by their experience.

You'll find Curtis work easy and pleasant. Most of the people you know are well acquainted with Curtis publications, and they will be glad to have you take care of their new and renewal subscriptions—and their gift list, too! For each subscription sent us you keep a liberal commission. But that's not all! In addition, you may earn a monthly bonus which increases with your production, as you will see from the inclosed booklet.

As soon as you have secured your first subscription, your business is established. We allow the same commission for renewals as for new subscriptions. You can, therefore, build up a list which will pay you generous profits, year after year, with very little effort on your part. And since there are no restrictions as to where you may work, your profits are limited only by the amount of time you can give us.

I feel so confident you will want to join our staff of money-makers now and get a firm grip on the steady, growing profits your territory offers that I am inclosing right with this letter, not only the full details of our plan, but all of the supplies that you will need to begin work at once—including our official receipt book, which identifies you as authorized to secure subscriptions for us. I'm not even waiting for the usual business references; you can send them along with your first order.

It's the start that counts. Make your start right now. Before night I'm sure you'll have your first Curtis profits. And when you have the money in your pocket, send me the best possible answer to this letter—a "roar" for more supplies with your first fat order.

You CAN mail it tonight. Dol

The Need of a Campaign. The foregoing letter was not the last of the series. To convince a customer takes time. Consequently, we see that the business man plans to send not one but many follow-up letters to his prospects. Although he knows that not all of these prospects can be turned into customers, nevertheless he realizes that if he stops before he has received an inquiry at least, all that has been done before has been wasted.

A typical campaign shows that out of one hundred orders received, the replies came in as follows:

First letterno replies
Second letterseven replies
Third letter
Fourth letternineteen replies
Fifth lettertwenty-four replies
Sixth lettertwenty-two replies
After the seventh lettersixteen replies

Knowing then that there must be a number of follow-ups, the question arises: How many?

This question is quite closely tied up with the sort of campaign that the firm is undertaking.

Two Kinds of Campaigns—the "Wear-Out" Type. There are, in general, two types of campaigns—popularly called the "wear-out" and the "continuous" campaigns. The number of letters sent out in the wear-out campaign depends almost entirely on how well they pay. After the first letter is sent out, the number of sales is counted and the profits figured. A certain percentage of the profits is allotted to the cost of putting out a second letter. The returns from the second letter and others which may follow gauge the further expenditure of funds for that campaign. Any letter is generally used as long as it pays.

Here are the last three letters of a series of six.

A BIT OF FRIENDLY ADVICE FROM PRESIDENT BLANK:

My friend, I have never had the privilege of meeting you personally, but I feel that we have much in common, and sooner or later, we are going to be good friends. Perhaps you think I am a pretty persistent fellow, but if you could only realize the real value of what I am offering you, it wouldn't take you many minutes to make up your mind.

Just the other day, one of our former students who was visiting in Chicago came into my office, and shaking me by the hand said "Mr. Blank, the only thing I have against you is that you didn't make me take the course a year sooner than I did. I have made more money during the past year than I ever made before in my life."

I can't MAKE you or anyone else take our course and reap its advantages, but I can show you what it means to you in a steady weekly income of dollars and cents. It then rests with you to decide what you will do. I can't believe that you will allow the small sum of \$20.00 to stand between you and this opportunity to learn a profession that can net you \$1.00 an hour for every hour you choose to work.

Are you willing to plod along in the same old rut year after year while others are taking advantage of our training and securing hundreds of dollars in earnings that might just as well be yours? Forget your doubts and fears for just once in your life, and believe me when I tell you that if I thought you were not capable of becoming a successful retoucher, I would tell you frankly not to try it. Almost every day I advise prospective students not to take the course, or I reject their application because I believe them to be too old, or otherwise unfitted for this work. Judging from the character of your first letter I believe that you CAN SUCCEED, and I want the satisfaction of teaching you this wonderful profession and helping you to establish a permanent income for yourself.

If you can afford to pay cash for the course, by all means do so and save the discount of \$10.00, but if you prefer the deferred payment plan, then the small sum of \$20.00 will get you started. The balance you can pay in monthly installments of \$10.00 each. Be fair to yourself—fill out the application blank right now and mail it today with your remittance. It will be the best day's work you ever did.

Faithfully yours,

A LETTER IN WHICH I AM ASKING A FAVOR. WILL YOU GRANT IT?

I wonder if you will do me a small favor? It won't take but five minutes of your time, and it will help me a lot. I want you to tell me frankly what's wrong with our proposition. I have sent you literature, written you numerous letters—in fact, presented our proposition to you in the clearest and most concise manner possible, and yet apparently I have not been able to make you see its advantages.

I am not blaming you—on the contrary, I blame myself for not explaining various points clearly enough to make you understand how much you are losing every day by not being a professional retoucher. If I were to show you where someone was collecting five dollars every day that rightfully belonged to you, I am sure you would lose no time in claiming your money. The profession we are offering to teach you will mean equally as much or more to you in real cash as soon as you complete our course of instruction. By failing to take this simple training course, you are letting someone else collect the money that might just as well be yours.

You surely wish to earn more money or you would not have answered our ad in the first place. Can you think of a pleasanter, cleaner way of earning money? Can you think of any sort of work you could do at home that would net you anywhere near \$1.00 an hour? Think of it, we assume all the risk of getting work for you to do after completing our course. You have no soliciting to do. We bear all the expense of securing work for you and getting you started, and to make you doubly safe, we give you our \$500 guarantee bond that if we do not secure paying work for you within 30 days after completing our course, we will refund to you every dollar of tuition you have paid us.

If you could only talk with some of our students, and see how enthusiastic they are, you would make almost any sacrifice to become master of this fascinating profession. Your signature on our enrollment blank, and the payment of a few dollars will place all this within your grasp. We will still allow you the liberal cash discount which enables you to secure our entire course for \$50.00 if you send the full amount with your application. If you are not financially able to pay all cash in advance, then it is your privilege to secure this same instruction and all its benefits by paying \$20.00 down and the balance in payments of \$10.00 monthly until \$60.00 has been paid.

Delays are dangerous. Don't put if off another day. Fill out the enrollment blank which we previously sent you, and get it in the mail today. If you do you will get the pleasantest surprise of your life when you open the working outfit which we shall send you, all charges prepaid. Remember, Today is the time to act.

THE LAST LETTER I SHALL WRITE YOU, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL:

This is the last letter I shall write you, and I am doing so now because certain conditions have arisen which enable me to offer you a most unusual opportunity—a chance to step right into a fine paying business as soon as you are prepared to turn out the work.

I must secure immediately three additional retouchers, who have been instructed under the Arteraft Method, to help handle the business in the state of Texas. These retouchers are to be trained by us just as rapidly as possible, and put to work in their own homes at a rate of payment that should net them at least \$1.00 an hour for every hour they work.

I am giving you the first chance to become one of these three retouchers, and fit yourself to handle the work in your state permanently. This should mean \$10.00 a day to you if you can devote full time to the work, or at least \$1.00 an hour for part time. This is just what you have been looking for so long—a chance to turn all or part of your time into money without leaving home.

You have been told all about our method of teaching retouching by correspondence in our previous letters. You can start right now with a small payment of \$10.00, and the balance of the tuition payable \$10.00 monthly until \$60.00 has been paid. Or you can send \$50.00 cash with your application, which pays in full for the course. In this way you can save \$10.00 on the price of the course.

Possibly you have imagined that you were not capable of learning retouching, and that your money would be wasted. Right here let me tell you that you CAN learn if you have just a little perseverance and are willing to follow instructions. Others, with far less intelligence than you possess, have learned this business within a few weeks and are now earning big money. If I did not believe you could be successful, I certainly would not make you this offer, for the complete working outfit and the first three lessons which are sent you immediately cost us double the amount of your first payment.

I must have your decision within ten days at the very latest—sooner if possible. If you cannot take advantage of this offer someone else is going to jump at the chance of securing this fine, profitable business in your state. I want you to be one of the Lucky Three, and I have sent you a self-addressed envelope in which to forward your enrollment application. This means a great deal to you, and I hope to hear from you without delay.

Cordially yours,

The foregoing are typical of the mail order business, whose correspondents keep always in mind that there are, roughly speaking, four classes of people to whom its follow-up letters go: those who are stubborn; those who are poor; those who desire the commodity but have neglected to take action; those yet to be "closed."

Aim of Wear-Out Campaign. The wear-out campaign is not generally expected to close the sale, but to bring inquiries. Their main task is to arouse not mere curiosity but *interest*. When the prospect under such circumstances does answer and the sales representative finally asks for an interview the prospect is likely to be receptive. Undoubtedly the follow-up letter smooths the salesman's path toward getting an order. Many a prospect who will read a letter would not give the salesman an interview. When the salesman's call has been preceded by a good sales letter campaign, he finds that the prospect knows all about the thing he sells and is about ready to turn his desire for the goods into a decision to buy.

The Continuous Campaign. In the second type of campaign, the continuous campaign, the aim is to keep the firm and its products, or service, constantly fresh in the mind of the prospect, so that when he is in the market for the dealer's particular line of goods, he will unhesitatingly think of the writer's firm. The bombardment may go on for months or years, yet the prospect should never be made acutely aware of any pressure being brought to bear upon him to get his business. Great care should be taken to prevent each letter from hindering the success of the letter which follows, and no reference should be made to the prospect's failure to respond to former attempts to get his order. The approaches to the customer's interest are varied, but the cost of sending out the letter is kept as uniform as possible.

The following letter is typical of the letters sent out in a continuous campaign:

Dear Madam:

Supplementing our recent letter asking your consideration of Ideal Boilers and American Radiators for your heating requirements, we should like to review briefly the reasons why this product is the most satisfactory means of heating any building.

In the first place, you assume no risk with an Ideal Boiler. It is a time-tested, scientific product designed and perfected at our institute of Thermal Research—the largest of its kind in the world. Behind the boiler are years of successful service, and the reputation of the American Radiator Company. It is a permanent investment that will pay you dividends in the form of satisfactory heating, saving in care-taking labor and economy in fuel consumption, year after year.

The many special advantages of Ideal Boilers are outlined, briefly, in the folder.

We earnestly ask your consideration and selection of Ideal Boilers and American Radiators, because we truly believe they would give you the biggest return on your investment, and we are still looking forward to your request for our special catalog describing Ideal Outfits more in detail. Will you send for it today?

Very truly yours,

Keeping the Mailing List Efficient. An efficient followup system is essential to successful selling by mail. From whatever source a lead has been obtained—advertising, dealers, salesmen, friends, inquiries, or what not—it should be followed up diligently until either the order is obtained, or the firm becomes convinced that its efforts are fruitless. Whether or not the campaign will be successful often depends quite as much on possessing a good mailing list as it does on the letters themselves. Yet few firms can congratulate themselves that their list is handled as well as it might be.

A Tickler System for Follow-Up Work. Before the envelopes are addressed, the list should be carefully considered. After the letters go out, and the responses come in, some arrangement has to be made for a "tickler system." There are three general types of such systems.

The first involves the correspondent's marking the date due for attention on the letter and the file clerk's making a small card—three inches by five—showing the due date, the writer's name, and the date of the letter. The carbon is then placed in the regular file where it may be found at any time and the three-by-five card is placed in the tickler file.

The second tickler system involves the making of an extra carbon for the tickler file. These carbons are distributed according to the due date in a series of folders numbered from one to thirty-one. Ordinarily, three such sets are needed to cover the three successive months. The disadvantage to this system is that the letter is likely to be attended to before the due date without the carbon being removed. Then, in error, on the due date, a second attempt to follow-up the matter is made.

The third system involves the keeping of a separate file for unfinished business. This file is in two sections; one arranged alphabetically; the other chronologically. The original letter is placed in the alphabetical file, and the carbon in the chrono-

logical file, that is, the tickler file. The system has the disadvantage of separating the original and the carbon; not only involving the hunting for both in separate files, but also the danger of their never being assembled again.

The first system is undoubtedly the best.

CHAPTER XVIII

TURNING COMPLAINTS INTO ADJUSTMENTS

The Need of "Resale." "If the goods we've sold once would only stay sold, we'd get somewhere," groans the chief, in a moment of despair. Everybody looks up as he goes on. "I happened to overhear Barnes when he took this order from Forbes and French. It was like pulling teeth. And now we have got to practically sell Forbes all over again, just because somebody blundered. Oh, I know you do the best you can, in general, and I suppose that's all anyone can ask. This isn't the first mistake we've ever made, and if I know anything about it, it won't be the last, no matter how careful we are."

Mistakes Will Happen. When you stop to think of it, from the time the transaction is started until it is finished, there are a dozen chances of something going wrong. The buyer may believe he has ordered the goods because he instructed his chief clerk to send through a requisition for them, but perhaps that particular order never actually went out. If it did, it may never have reached its proper destination. However, assuming that the order has been delivered, it may be incorrectly filled or include defective goods. It may run "short" or "over," be improperly packed, or incorrectly addressed. It may be delayed in the shipping department, either in error or because of instructions from the credit department to hold. It may be damaged or held up in transit, owing to wrong routing, improper handling, embargoes, carriage break-downs, or poor deliveries.

Letters of Complaint. The man who is not satisfied wants to have the matter made right at once. One of the first things he will do is to write the firm a letter voicing his grievances with childish abandon.

That is the mood in which the tenant wrote the following letter of complaint to her landlord:

Dear Sir:

You told me that if I would vacate my apartment during the week of September 13 you would have the repairs which we agreed upon made, and that I could return September 21 and find everything done.

I put myself to great inconvenience in order to carry out my part, but when I got back this morning, I found things untouched.

Now what are you going to do about it? I can't leave the city again at this time; I won't stay in a house where the paint is fresh; and I certainly will not endure the smoky ceilings, and the faded wall papers and so forth any longer.

I am strongly tempted to move at once. At any rate, you may be sure that I shall not stay after my lease expires.

I don't intend to rely upon your word in the future, and shall not pay my rent for October until everything is done to my entire satisfaction.

In the meantime, I shall go to a hotel, and deduct my expenses from your bill, $Yours \ truly,$

Avoid the Angry Tone. Such letters do not improve the situation. They are like the lash of a whip. They make the reader as furious as the writer himself was. Yet most folks under irritating circumstances write in an angry tone. Of course, they repel, even if they do not kill, any impulse their reader may have to be liberal, and make it hard for him to be tactful.

Give All the Pertinent Facts. When we stop to think, we see that the letter of complaint should be not only courteous but clear. It ought to contain all the facts which the firm needs to know before it can act: dates, order numbers, prices, and the like. Besides these, it may contain any available information as to the cause of the difficulty; it should state clearly what

settlement would be satisfactory, and it should tell why the writer believes he is entitled to have his claims granted.

The writer of the following letter, a business woman, covers the requirements very well. She gives dates, order number and price, besides recalling the story of the purchase.

An Effective Letter of Complaint.

Gentlemen:

On July 23 I ordered a wing chair at \$57.00 which was to be especially upholstered for me in blue-gray Stay-so denim.

You billed me for this chair on August 1 under order number 81086.

Last Wednesday, I telephoned that I should like the chair delivered at once because I wanted it very much by Sunday. You promised to deliver it before Wednesday night, but Thursday you telephoned me that you had not been able to locate it up to that moment, but would continue to search for it and would telephone me later in the day.

Mr. Gardner, your salesman, did as he promised, but he said that you were still unable to find the chair.

Early Friday morning, I went to your store and, with Mr. Gardner's assistance, selected another chair which he said could be delivered at once.

This is Monday but the chair has not arrived. I very much needed the chair Sunday, but, of course, I had to get along without it as best I could.

I am writing this letter not only to call your attention to the fact that in spite of my urgent need the chair has not been delivered; but also to point out to you an instance where your service has proved inadequate. If such a delay should happen a second time, I should lose confidence in your reliability.

Will you see that the chair is delivered without further delay?

Sincerely yours,

Such a letter, written in a calm, courteous, and tolerant tone, should be all that is needed to get results, since the progressive firm realizes that the frank customer is giving it an opportunity to keep his trade by making the loss good. Tactful Response to Complaints. Here is a very short letter which expresses the gratitude of a large concern to a complainant:

Dear Customer:

You will find with this letter a check for the amount due you.

We thank you for letting us make this right.

Refund \$24.75

Yours truly,

Many firms go further by angling for complaints. They know that some of their dissatisfied customers, instead of voicing their discontent, merely stop ordering goods of them and trade elsewhere.

A Sales Letter from the Adjustment Point of View. Below is a letter written in a conversational tone which is likely to bring in some hitherto unreported complaints:

Gentlemen:

I haven't heard from you for over a year. My customers are my most valuable asset, so I'm mighty anxious to keep them and to know the reason for a prolonged absence like yours. Will you tell me?

Rendering quick, accurate, satisfactory service to the 6000 firms on our books is a difficult job; and I know that once in a while, in spite of our best efforts, something goes wrong and a customer does not get the quality, service and satisfaction he has a right to expect from us.

The customer who makes known a complaint is my friend; so please remember I will consider it a favor if you will take up with me personally any complaint or suggestions you may have for the improvement of our service.

I thank you for the business you have given us and will try to show my appreciation by giving you "Labels as you want them when you want them" on any future orders you entrust to us.

Very truly yours,

P. S. We are in our busy season now but will take care of you. Of course, if we could have three or four weeks it would be better for us.

The attitude of one large men's store is brought out in these paragraphs of a letter written to all recent customers:

We appreciate the fact that many men are of the "good fellow" type who hesitate to complain about trivial matters, but remember, you are doing us a favor by informing us when our merchandise or service does not prove entirely up to par.

We are enclosing a return card and trust you will favor us with your opinions and suggestions as to how we may better serve you.

The Adjustment Office—Its Routine. In any concern where the number of sales is large, all complaints go to the adjustment manager for prompt attention. The ideal way to handle adjustments would be to investigate the facts at once and write a letter making the proper settlement the same day that the complaint is received.

But generally, it takes time to investigate the claim; therefore a letter of acknowledgment is written. This letter expresses the regret of the concern that the customer has had any difficulty with its goods or service and then hastens to assure him that the cause of his complaint will be investigated without delay. The writer of such a letter is very careful not to promise more than he can fulfil and to leave the impression that the customer may expect fair and courteous treatment.

Gentlemen:

Our SX Order #1491 Inv. B-2031 Dated 12/13

Today over the telephone you told our Mr. Buck that we shipped you two commutators instead of one. We are sorry that there was any misunderstanding.

However, we are investigating the matter and shall send shipping instructions and a tag so that the extra commutator may be returned to us.

Thank you for calling this overshipment to our attention.

Very truly yours,

The foregoing letter confirms an oral complaint. It is an example of the *brief* routine letter that provides the lubricant which makes business go smoothly.

Writing Adjustment Letters. Invariably, before the adjustment correspondent begins to write, he should have all the facts in hand. Moreover, he should be determined to show that he is sympathetic with the customer's point of view. Without knowledge and *good-will* he will get nowhere, but with these two he may be confident that he will not have to resort to either conquest or compromise with their obvious weaknesses; he can proceed to write a letter which will bring about the customer's conversion to his own point of view.

It may take a good deal of imagination to discover an agreeable beginning, but to do so is very important. If the tone of the letter is not right at the start the effect of the whole letter is likely to be spoiled.

Avoiding Unpleasant Words. The impression of good-will is obtained by pleasant language. There are two kinds of words which the letter-writer should be careful to avoid. First, there are those which are likely to intensify the customer's grievance, like: complaint, inconvenience, refuse, carelessness, trouble, unfair, neglect. There are other words which imply that the customer may not be telling the truth. You claim and you state are both more or less insulting in their insinuation, but we suspect is probably even worse.

Do Not Beat Around the Bush. The writer should express his regret, but he should be careful not to awaken the customer's irritation by recalling the unpleasant unfortunate circumstances that lie behind his complaint. After all, the main thing the customer is interested in is the adjustment the firm is going to make. The wise adjustment man loses no time in satisfying the customer's curiosity—especially when the company is granting the claim.

In the following letter a "house that covers the country" is making an adjustment with a dealer. The tone is business-like, yet the fact that the reader is not kept in suspense about the firm's willingness to comply with his request makes this letter very satisfactory to him.

Gentlemen:

If the coffee set which you purchased from us some time ago is not proving satisfactory, let us suggest that you return it to us for credit.

In returning this set to us, please be sure that it is well packed, so as to avoid breakage; and that your name and address appear plainly upon the outside of the package so as to avoid any delay in handling.

Yours truly,

The Department Store Policy. The next letter illustrates the department store policy which assumes that "the customer is always right"—not that she is, of course; but having once taken its stand that it was better to suffer its numerous but small losses than it was to incur the reputation among its women customers of being unfair, the department store could not, in the face of present-day competition, abandon its policy—if it would.

Dear Madam:

Thank you for returning the merchandise which was not satisfactory. The amount due, including the charges you paid, is enclosed.

We want to please you with everything you purchase from us and are always glad to return your money if you are not satisfied for any reason whatever. Any time that you have any suggestions or criticisms to offer regarding our merchandise or our service do not hesitate to tell us frankly about them. After all, it is what you think that counts with us.

Your orders and letters are always welcome and it is surely a pleasure to serve you.

Yours truly,

Between Business Firms—Businesslike Fairness. If the transaction is between business firms the second policy, which says "the customer must be treated fairly," is more generally used.

The following letter, as you will see, makes what the firm believes is a liberal adjustment but it doesn't leave its customer in doubt as to what it can be counted upon to do ordinarily; and it tells him exactly why it is willing to share the loss.

Gentlemen:

We have carefully examined the pair of stock #C239 which were returned for inspection and find the upper of the right shoe in very bad condition, due to perspiration. We note also that the heels are worn down and the general condition of the shoes leads one to believe that they were worn for a reasonable length of time. We cannot under any condition guarantee a shoe to wear for a certain limit of time, because all shoes are not worn under the same conditions.

We do not wish to seem unfair or unreasonable in our dealings, therefore, since the shoes have already been replaced we are willing to share the loss equally with you so that the matter may be adjusted in a satisfactory manner.

Kindly let us know whether or not this adjustment meets with your approval.

Yours very truly,

As it happened, the customer had another pair of shoes of the same number returned, so he wrote again to the manufacturer complaining about them. The situation thus became even more serious. Now the firm realizes very keenly the embarrassment its salesman will experience when he next calls on this country storekeeper. It, therefore, makes sure that the customer will feel that he is dealing not only with a liberal manufacturer, but with a reliable one whose shoes are made honestly. The letter must express sincere regret, yet it cannot afford to be cringing. It must be both courteous and firm.

Here is the second letter to the dealer:

Gentlemen:

We are certainly sorry to learn that you have had some trouble with C239 and that you have been put to some expense in having them repaired. This number is constructed from the best materials we can buy and is sold with the positive assurance that it will give the maximum of service to be expected.

We believe that the two pairs in question are exceptions, as we have had no previous complaint on this pattern. If you have any more of this number returned we should appreciate your sending them in for our inspection so that we can take up the defect with the factory manager so as to eliminate further trouble along this line.

Yours very truly,

The Aim of Adjustment—a Square Deal. Wholesalers generally settle each case on its merits. As a result, the claim is sometimes granted in part, sometimes in full, and sometimes not at all. And occasionally a firm finds that it must exercise its legal rights.

Thus we see that although wholesale adjustment letters are stricter than retail ones in their insistence on the carrying out of the terms of the contract, both are alike in their desire to convince the customer that he is getting a square deal. Likewise, both are careful not only to make the right adjustment, but to make it willingly.

CHAPTER XIX

COLLECTING WHAT'S DUE

The Guiding Principles—Promptness and Regularity. Suppose John Jones owes you some money and you have decided to collect it by mail. What kind of letter will get what is due you and also keep John's friendship and trade? Before you begin to write, you should do a good deal of thinking because John is probably like most of us, a little "touchy" about being reminded that he hasn't paid his debts. If your thinking results in a plan which you follow regularly, pretty soon John Jones and all the rest of your customers will learn that you expect them to pay what they owe when the bill is due. Promptness and regularity are both essential in making successful collections.

A Series of Appeals Often Necessary. You probably know from experience that you will often have to ask for your money more than once. You should have in readiness the whole series of reminders and letters that you intend to use. You should know from experience how long a time should elapse between the date of the purchase and the time when the unpaid bill should come up for final action. Having established the length of this period, the letters themselves can be timed and the number in the series determined.

For instance, a certain vacuum cleaner company selling on the instalment plan sends its series of seven collection letters ten days apart; there are seven so that it is about seventy days before they finally take back the cleaner on which a deposit only has been paid. A well-known department store sends out four letters dated twenty days apart before it turns the account over to its attorney. A country store might plan to send not more than two letters before it would feel it necessary to go directly to the customer and talk the situation over. But four or five letters, spread over three or four months, make up the average series.

Each one of your letters should remind your customer that he owes you money, and each should show more strongly than its predecessor that you are determined your debtor eventually shall pay what he owes you.

Steps in the Series—The Bill and Statement. Let us consider the various attempts to collect which the ordinary business man makes.

The bill is the first notice of indebtedness that the customer receives. Then follow one or two statements bearing possibly a line or two of typed or printed matter like the following:

We should appreciate your remittance.

The First Letter. If such reminders do not bring results, you begin to send out the series of collection letters. The first of these should be impersonal in tone. It can afford to appear to be just what it is—a form letter which is sent out as a matter of routine. When a customer receives such a letter he doesn't feel very keenly that he is being "dunned," yet such a letter may be strong enough to prompt him to pay. The following letter was sent out by a retail store as the first of its collection series. It is so mild that it should not offend anyone:

Dear Madam:

We are placing before you the inclosed statement which represents your June purchases, and which, no doubt, has just been overlooked.

We shall appreciate your letting us have a check at this time, and are looking forward to serving you again in the near future.

Yours very truly,

Asking for An Explanation. Now if a letter like that does not bring in the check or some sort of explanation, the next letter should aim to find out why the account is not being paid. Frequently, a letter asking for an explanation brings in the cash instead; especially if there is no good reason why the bill should not be paid. Perhaps it has been merely overlooked. Perhaps the customer was unusually short of money when the bill came due, but can meet it now.

Sometimes, however, the customer is holding up the check because of some defect in the goods or service which he has not as yet reported to the firm. A letter like the following fishes for an explanation. It also contains a definite request for payment:

Dear Madam:

Since a balance has been open on your account for some time, it occurs to us that possibly you may be withholding payment because some adjustment on your account has not received our proper attention.

If so, will you please give us the details so that we may make the necessary adjustment without delay.

If the account is correct, we must request that you make immediate settlement so that it will not be necessary to trouble you further.

Very truly yours,

Bal. \$26.36

Collection Appeals—To Guide. The letters that follow the first two try one appeal after another; among others, pride, fair play, or fear. Here are a few such letters.

The first illustration is a letter used by the owner of a general store. Because this letter comes straight from the shoulder, it brought a good response from nearly every debtor:

Dear Mr. Blank:

Do you remember that time you loaned your friend Bill five dollars for a couple of weeks, and after more than two weeks had passed you met him on the street and said, "Bill, how about that five?" Did Bill turn on his heel and walk away without a word? Being a gentleman, he did not.

He either said, "Right you are, old man. Sorry I forgot it—here you are," and paid; or he said "Sorry I haven't got it on me, but I'll pay you next Saturday sure," and he kept his word.

Did it ever occur to you that to utterly ignore a letter asking for payment of an overdue account is just as discourteous as it would have been if Bill had turned on his heel and left you without a word?

It won't cost you even an envelope and stamp to answer us—we enclose them. Put in your check and get this small account out of the way. If you can't do that figure out the date you can pay and write us so we'll know where we stand.

Don't "turn on your heel" and walk away without a word.

Yours very truly,

—To Fair Play. Here is another letter published in *The Mailbag* that is said to have brought 90% returns. It seems that out of regard for the *customer* the creditor is not using its full power to collect. On the face of the facts—the 90% response to its appeal to the spirit of fair play is convincing.

Gentlemen:

How many accounts have you on your books that are six months, one year or eighteen months old? What do you do with them? Charge off and forget them—or place the account in the hands of an attorney or a collection agency?

You know that this is a serious problem.

You do not like to embarrass your customers by placing the delinquent accounts in the hands of an attorney, which in the terms of dollars and cents is a costly affair, and in the terms of credit and reputation is very detrimental. Yet something must be done to protect you against such losses as result from customers who allow their credit standing to fall below the low water mark and avoid paying their just obligations.

We know that you must have had some experience with old accounts and are therefore asking your advice in the matter.

By the way—if you will send along your check covering our invoice, which is now considerably past due, you will have helped materially to solve this problem.

Yours very truly,

—To Fear. A letter which urges the debtor to protect his credit standing should make manifest that it is written in the mutual interest of the debtor and the creditor.

Dear Sir:

Your attention was directed to your overdue balance of \$10.55 on February 1, but you have not replied.

Why do you prevent your account from being in an excellent position? Don't you realize it seriously reflects on your credit reputation to continually withhold payment? When this shipment was passed several months ago, we had not the least doubt of your willingness to pay promptly. Do not compel us to adopt other measures. Will you please send your check for \$10.55 now?

Yours sincerely,

The Next to the Last Letter—We Shall Draw on You. Appeals of this type do very well in the middle of the series followed by two much more powerful letters.

The next to the last letter may notify the customer that you are drawing on him.

The following letter is of this type:

Dear Sir:

The balance as shown below is still open on your account although fully due, and assuming that you do not object to our Drawing on you for this amount, we shall, provided we do not hear from you favorably on or before April 10, 1929.

We request you to honor this draft upon presentation.

It would be more satisfactory to us, however, were you to send your check in settlement before that date.

Amount due January 30, 1929: \$3.25.

Yours truly,

The Final Letter—in Our Attorney's Hands. The final letter in the series generally notifies the customer that if an immediate response is not made the account will be turned over to an attorney, or a collection agency:

Dear Sir:

This is our Final Notice to you. Unless we receive your check in full settlement of your account as shown on the enclosed statement to reach us within Ten Days from the above date we shall at once place it in our attorney's hands for immediate suit, without further notice to you.

Collection of Instalments. The collection of instalments calls for a rather long series of letters. Each letter should contain a sales talk so that the goods will continue to seem valuable and desirable enough to hold until they are paid for. From the very beginning the series weaves together the sales and the collection appeals.

An Instalment Series—Statement and Reminder. Below is a statement from the Hoover Company to its instalment customers. It contains a short sales paragraph which aims to keep the customer sold on the goods; and also a short paragraph which preaches prompt payment.

STATEMENT

(Dealer's Name)

6/20/22

Mrs. A. W. Jones 1002 Broad Ave. N.W. Canton, Ohio

OLD	BALANCE	DATE	REFERENCE	DEBIT	CREDIT	New Balance
		5/19 5/18	Invoice Ck.	68.25	6.25	\$62.00

June payment of \$6.20 due.

The Hoover Suction Sweeper lifts the rug off the floor.
It Beats

As It Sweeps As It Cleans.

Adherence to sales terms is the foundation of good business and credit. We request prompt payment in the same courteous manner that we solicit your trade.

Then follows a series of seven letters which are sent out to customers who do not meet their payments on time. Let us examine each in turn.

The First Letter. The first letter stresses the ease and convenience of the Hoover, and shows an easy way of meeting payments by having a Hoover Fund; but note how it ends with a strong suggestion that the customer should first bring her account up to date. It repeats the amount that is due and thus firmly fixes that amount in the customer's mind.

Dear Madam:

No doubt like thousands of others, you now feel that The Hoover Suction Sweeper saves time and money in Many Ways.

Now that you have used The Hoover you, too, wonder how you ever got along without it.

You realize that it saves you many times the few small monthly payments necessary to make it permanently yours.

It is important that these monthly payments be made regularly. No doubt you have overlooked the fact that your first instalment—\$6.20—has not been paid.

It is our request that these payments be made on the same date of the month which your bill was dated. However, if another time in the month will be more convenient, we will adjust our records to accord with your instructions.

Many Hoover owners find that the easiest way to save this monthly payment is to set aside only 21c a day in a "Hoover Fund." By the end of the month they are able to make their payments without any inconvenience.

We recommend this plan to you. Begin now to save your next month's instalment. But first, bring your account up to date by making prompt remittance, upon receipt of this letter, of the \$6.20 which is now due.

The Second Letter. The second letter stresses the selling points of the devices, and brings to bear the endorsement of carpet and rug manufacturers. It aims definitely to counteract any tendency the customer may have to give up his cleaner. After it presumably has resold the customer, it makes a favorable comparison between the amount of the instalment due, and the value of the service rendered. It repeats the amount of the instalment and calls attention to the number of days it has been overdue. It suggests that regular payments are easy to make. It shows that two payments are much harder to make than one, and closes with a request for payment by return mail:

Dear Madam:

There is considerable satisfaction in knowing that your Hoover Suction Sweeper is endorsed by the leading carpet and rug manufacturers.

They know it will keep floor coverings in the best of conditions, actually making them wear years longer if used regularly by keeping dangerous, destructive embedded grit beaten out, swept up and suctioned dustlessly away.

It is the experience the country over of those owning Hoovers that they would not part with their Hoover for many times its cost.

Your experience has no doubt been similar. It has been a most valuable servant, so valuable, indeed, that we imagine the \$6.20 per month which you have agreed to pay seems small in comparison to the benefits derived.

And it is small. We made it so purposely, that it would be easy to pay every month. But the months soon slip by, almost before you know it, and you have no doubt overlooked the fact that your first instalment of \$6.20 has been due now for days.

You may find it a little difficult in raising double the amount when your next month's payment comes due. Make your payments regularly and they will be easy. May we have your remittance by return mail? We thank you.

The Third Letter. The third letter says that the account is *delinquent*, and calls attention to the fact that two payments are overdue. It makes a demand instead of a request for payment.

Dear Madam:

You have no doubt noticed considerable improvement in the appearance of your floor coverings since you have been cleaning them with your Hoover Suction Sweeper.

They look fresher and brighter, don't they? That's because they're clean. And if you clean them regularly they will wear many years longer, and in that way your savings will eventually pay for your Hoover many times over.

This is only one of the many savings a Hoover makes possible. It saves you much time, and—as you have probably discovered—a lot of distasteful, hard work.

Therefore, The Hoover is worth all its costs, isn't it?—especially when the cost is distributed over several months in such easy payments.

But it is important that these payments be made regularly when due, and we regret to notice that your account is delinquent. Your first two payments of \$6.20 each, due and respectively, are in arrears.

Individually, these payments are small and easy to handle. Two dimes and a penny laid aside each day will enable you to meet your payment without hardship.

Don't let these payments accumulate. Settle your account without further delay. Call at our office and let us have your check for \$12.40 or if more convenient, remit by return mail. We thank you.

The Fourth Letter. The fourth letter asks for a check to cover the two payments "today."

Dear Madam:

Each time you use your Hoover Suction Sweeper on your rugs it combines into one easy, speedy operation, six individual and equally important kinds of work.

It Beats—as it Sweeps—as it Cleans—as it Straightens Nap—as it Freshens Colors—as it Prolongs Life.

It is this ideal combination of the essentials of complete rug care that makes The Hoover such a valuable "servant to the home." You cannot afford to be without it.

And you should never have to be without it. We have made it easy for you to own it. But for some reason you are paying for it the easy way—by the month.

It reminds us of the story of the two old negroes, one of whom had owed the other some money a long time. Said Rastus, "Does yo' still refuse to pay me dem two dollars Ah done loaned yo' de lawd only knows when?"

"Nussah," dignifiedly replied Brother Bogus, "Ah doesn't refuse; Ah just refrains."

You will find your payments easy to meet if you make them regularly. So therefore, before you lay this letter aside, please write and mail at once your check for \$12.40, covering the and instalments.

This will bring your account up to date and thereafter, if you set aside just 21c a day, your payments will take care of themselves. Won't you do this today?

Very truly yours,

The Fifth Letter. The fifth letter asks for an explanation. It offers to work out a plan whereby the past due payments can be taken care of and the account cleared up. It sets a definite hour on the morrow for the customer to appear at the office of the writer.

Dear Madam:

There must be some reason!

To date we have written you four letters concerning your overdue account for the Hoover Suction Sweeper purchased.

And you have paid no attention to any of them.

We do not believe you would feel very friendly toward us if we ignored your correspondence in that way.

But we have felt all along that there was some reason. So won't you call upon the writer promptly? Through a personal interview we are sure a mutually satisfactory understanding and adjustment can be reached.

We want this Hoover to be your property, fully paid for. We feel confident that you would not want to keep house without it. It has no doubt become a necessity in your weekly cleaning, as it should be.

So let's work out some plan whereby your past due payments can be taken care of and your account cleared up. If you can call at 2 P.M. tomorrow, the writer will gladly extend every possible assistance.

We hope this time will be convenient to you.

The Sixth Letter. The sixth letter contrasts the pleasure of getting a Hoover with the pain of having it taken away; but it points out the approaching necessity of taking the Hoover back because the customer has not kept to his contract. It offers to hold the matter open for a few days and asks for the customer's immediate attention; otherwise it states that the delivery truck will call in one week and take up the cleaner.

Dear Madam:

It is always a pleasure for us to deliver a Hoover Suction Sweeper. It meets with such a cheerful reception, and we can imagine just how happy it is going to make that housewife, as it saves her time, her labor, and her rugs.

In the same way it pains us deeply when we have to call and take a Hoover away. We can realize how it is going to be missed—how hard it is going to be to have to get the old broom out again, and how soon the rugs will look faded, drab, and worn.

But no servant will work without being paid, and as you have, for some reason, expressed no intention to fulfil the terms of your contract when you purchased your Hoover, we can do nothing but take it back.

However, there may still be some misunderstanding. We have offered our assistance in every possible way. We suggested that you call and see us, believing that in a personal interview the entire matter could be satisfactorily adjusted.

This you have not done, to our great disappointment. Is there anything else we can do? We want to serve you. We want you to own that Hoover and to enjoy its lifetime use. So then, we are going to hold the matter open for a few days.

Please give this your immediate attention. It is urgent, for if we do not hear from you we shall have to instruct our delivery truck to call at your house one week from today and take up The Hoover.

The Final Letter. The final letter is signed by the president, whose name and position are relied upon to make a deep impression on the customer. This is the final appeal which the concern will make. If it is not followed immediately by favorable action, the machine will be taken away as threatened, and the customer will lose the deposit he has already paid.

Dear Madam:

Having a deep personal interest in every customer of our store, it is with much concern that I have reviewed our correspondence with you in connection with your account for a Hoover Suction Sweeper.

The file of this correspondence has just been placed before me by our Collection Department.

They have recommended to me that we arrange to call at your home and re-possess The Hoover, or send the account to our attorney.

You really cannot blame them for their attitude. The correspondence shows a very evident spirit of fairness, and a willingness to do everything possible to assist you in adjusting your account.

Yet, notwithstanding the fact that none of these letters have been acknowledged by you, I cannot bring myself to approve of any drastic action without writing you personally.

I cannot help but feel that it is an oversight on your part, and that, realizing its urgency, you will take care of it at once.

I am sure that you will answer me promptly, and I am going to place your record on my desk, awaiting your early reply.

A Wholesale Series. The other series that we will examine is one sent out by a wholesaler, Swift and Company. It consists of four letters. The first stresses the fact that the customer is not giving the company its trade but it also calls attention to the fact that the account is past due.

Gentlemen:

The above shows your account is past due, but What is More Important, It Shows We Are Not Getting Your Business, and we want it.

Send us payment and an order, as we want your account to be active.

Use your credit with us.

Yours respectfully,

The Second Letter. The second letter uses the same idea but intensifies it. Whereas the first says, "Send us payment and an order," the second one says, "We must have payment."

Gentlemen:

In our last letter about your account we mentioned that it was long past due, but we stressed the fact that we were not getting your business, and we invited you to use your credit with us.

It is not our object to get your money and close your account, but as it stands your account is of no benefit to us, so we must have payment, and we hope for more business.

Yours respectfully,

The Third Letter. The third, somewhat longer than either of the first two, points out the discourtesy on the part of the customer, and announces that it has placed the account with the collection agency with instructions to collect. It gives notice that it will draw on the customer and will follow the draft, if unhonored, by a suit, but it points out that the customer forced such an action.

Gentlemen:

We have been honestly trying to sell you the idea that we not only wanted payment but your business as well, and we have even invited you to use your credit with us again.

You have neither paid Nor Answered so we have placed the account with the Jobbers National Collection Agency, with instructions to collect.

The first step is to draw a special draft on you, and if that is ignored, the next is logically a suit.

We are sorry You Forced Such Action, but you appreciate we must have payment for goods shipped to you in good faith.

Your respectfully,

The Final Letter. The final letter gives the customer ten days to settle before suit is brought.

Gentlemen:

The Jobbers National Collection Agency inform us they are ready to handle this collection through their attorneys.

We are reluctant to embarrass or involve you in costs but unless you arrange a satisfactory settlement with us within ten days, they will bring suit without further instructions from us.

If this is done, the outcome will be due entirely to your own failure to cooperate in any particular.

Does not your judgment tell you to use the enclosed envelope today?

Yours respectfully,

CHAPTER XX

LANDING A JOB BY LETTER

A Type of Letter Which Concerns Everyone. To find square pegs for square holes—and round pegs for round holes—is the ideal of every employer. The right job offers the right sort of man an opportunity to put his heart and soul into his work. Since the letter of application plays a part in the fitting of jobs to men and men to jobs, it deserves the serious consideration of nearly all business persons.

Ways of Seeking a Job. There are four sensible ways to go about obtaining a position:

- 1. Answering a "help wanted" advertisement.
- 2. Inserting a "situation wanted" advertisement.
- 3. Writing directly to a list of employers who reasonably would be expected to hire a man of similar qualifications.
- **4.** Applying in person where one has reason to hope or expect that a vacancy may exist.

Three out of four of these methods of obtaining employment involve letter-writing—answering a "help wanted" advertisement; answering inquiries about one's own "situation wanted" advertisement (besides composing the advertisement itself); and writing directly to a list of employers. But even if one uses the fourth method he may be asked to write a letter of application for filing purposes.

A Sales Letter—Selling Your Services. Some one has said you can never tell what the man behind the letter is like, because his letter doesn't ring as true as a personal interview

would. Nevertheless it is his task in any letter—but especially in the letter of application—to carry over to the letter page the best points of his personality; and somehow "to write as he would talk."

The letter of application is a sales letter; with service as the commodity to be sold. The writer must learn to look at himself from the point of view of his reader. He must be able to see how his physical characteristics—age, height, weight—how his nationality, religious affiliation, education, experience, major interests, character and attitude toward life all combine to make him exactly the sort of man the employer is looking for. Otherwise the candidate certainly cannot expect the employer to see that here is the man to hire because of the service which he alone can render.

The Purpose—To Get an Interview. Since employers rarely hire men or women for responsible positions without seeing them, the purpose of the letter of application is to get an interview. The writer's effort from the beginning should be bent toward that end.

Essentials—Clear Self-Knowledge and Command of Language. The questions that go to the heart of the success of the letter of application are:

- 1. Do I know myself?
- 2. Do I know how to use words?

The writer needs such knowledge, since his letter has to include some personal data giving a record of his education, training and experience, as well as make an effort to persuade the reader of his general fitness for the work.

Typing or Handwriting. Since the letter of application is a business letter it should be typed except where the applicant is asked to answer in his own handwriting. The stationery and typography of the letter should be exceptionally good.

Answering a Blind Advertisement. When a blind advertisement is answered, the inside address on the letter should consist of the box number, initials or whatever other signature is used in the advertisement. The salutation should generally be *Dear Sir:* For example:

Globe 1034 Dear Sir:

Keep Out Discouragement and False Modesty. Unfortunately, the applicant is not likely to be at his best when he is out of a job and it is difficult for him to make his letter sound natural; yet a letter that is not natural is like a photograph that is not natural—a flat, uninteresting failure.

Besides the bad effects of possible discouragement creeping in to destroy the impression of confidence, the writer must not let so-called modesty affect the tone of his letter. Most of us are likely to be over-diffident about crying our own wares. Yet such modesty is really false; for if we do not believe ourselves worthy of the employer's confidence, we ought not to apply for the job in the first place. If we are properly qualified we do not need to feel self-conscious.

A Good Steeplejack But a Poor Letter-Writer. The following letter shows us an unskilled letter-writer, but a good steeplejack.

To Managing Director

Sir:

I am appealing to you for a situation permanent as an all round chimney repairer, to keep all your structures in perfect order, such as pointing, hooping, raising chimney to increase drought, which i have specialize in. On iron, are brick chimneys. Also you have a lot of iron structures, these require painting periodically, and I consider you have plenty to keep me going all the year round. Also you are dealing with an all round tall chimney repairer, who can advise as an expert on these structures, and if anything goes wrong you have a man on the job, who knows is work, without having to look for a man. Also majority of the masters of steeplejack firms, are not practical, they have to depend on there workman. Who often shows

unsatisfactory results. And i could save you time, labor, and overhead charges and expenses. Also i have 200 feet of ladder and rigging, which is enough for any of your structures, and i would make a sacrifice and bring all my rigging on the job which amounts to \$700 that would again save you expenses, if you could see your way of giving me a permanent job.

Now the reason i want to take this course. Because i find it pretty hard to keep going in my line, and the cause of it there is steeplejacks running about, are so call steeplejack confusing the masters of there abilities. If a man climbs a flagpole he put down as a steeplejack, that dont make him a bricklayer. But some of the masters fall for these men and with the structure been so high, they dont see the inferior job that been made. and many of them have no fix abode no overhead charges, but they undo fair competotion and i have made up my mind to give my service to any big firm if i can get a job regular and i should like an interview with you, and to explain to you of its success, Also i will enclose my catolog and testimonials of work done in Boston. Hoping i can have same returned.

Also i hope you will give my letter every consideration Yours truly

The Use of "I." The first person pronoun—I—is practically necessary in a letter of application. The applicant who omits it reveals both self-consciousness and lack of correct form. The applicant may manage to reduce the number of I's in his letter by revising his sentence structure, but he should have no hesitancy in using them whenever they are necessary. When it comes to recording our strong points in education, training and experience, why cannot we write facts as facts? Simply and sincerely related, these facts speak for us thus: I have had these advantages which ought to enable me to work harder, and to give you a deeper loyalty than I could otherwise.

Give Three References. The writer should remember all the time that he is trying to get an interview; during the whole letter he is trying to make the employer believe he is worth seeing and talking to. That is why he has given certain facts about himself; that is why he has expressed certain enthusiasm for the work the position calls for; that is why, also, he should refer to two or three persons whose position is such that they may be counted on to give intelligent, reliable, yet favorable, opinions of his ability.

Salary. He may or may not mention the salary he expects; but he certainly should be definite if such information is requested. However, it is generally sufficient to mention the salary one has obtained in former positions, leaving the matter of the exact salary of the new job to be determined at the time of the interview or later.

The Close. The letter closes with a definite request for an interview. The complimentary closing "Yours respectfully," strikes a fairly proper tone, although "Yours sincerely," may be more properly used when the letter is signed by a woman and addressed to a man.

Two Forms of Arrangement. There are two general ways of arranging such letters. The first is suited to the person whose record is so short and simple that it does not crowd the letter page. When the record is very long, however, a different arrangement is preferable. This method calls for placing the applicant's record on a sheet by itself. When such a page is used it should cover the following points:

- 1. The personal data given should include date of birth, height, weight, nationality, religious affiliation, and health.
- 2. Appropriate educational details include names of schools, date of graduation, special fields of study, publications, etc.
- 3. Under "training" should be shown a continuous record of employment; the firm name and complete address, name of proper officer to refer to, nature of position and duties, dates of beginning and ending employment and salary.

With such a page attached, the applicant may use the letter itself as a vehicle in which he makes an enthusiastic application; summarizes or characterizes his interests, education and experience; and devotes his chief energy to making a straightfrom-the-shoulder drive for an interview.

The Bare Facts Here, But No Picture. Although the material in the following letter might have been more effectively arranged, it is adequate to give all the facts needed. However, the letter-writer has not succeeded in conveying a true-to-life impression of his personality, as he might have done if he had used a separate sheet for the bare record of his career, and then concentrated his attention on "putting himself"—his hopes, ideals and enthusiasms—on the letter sheet.

Re your ad in morning Leader for Chief Accountant

211 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio May 11, 19 —

Dear Sirs:

My experience has been of the kind indicated in your advertisement:

19— to 19— Accountant with Reid, Mansfield & Co., Chicago, Ill.

19— to 19— Chief accountant with Charles Keefe & Co., Cleveland, Ohio

19— Traveling Auditor for the Alton Tire Co., Cleveland, Ohio

I am a graduate of the Bryant-Stratton Business College, Chicago Ill., and have completed a business course in the Northwestern School of Commerce, Chicago, Ill. Last year I passed the Illinois C.P.A. examination.

My references, by permission, are:

Mr. James Summers, 6423 Kimbark Ave., who can speak for my character and general ability.

Mr. Samuel Hill, Chief Accountant, Reid, Mansfield & Co., Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Harrison Forbes, Sales Manager, Alton Tire Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

I am 25, unmarried, and of American parentage.

If my qualifications are such as would fit me for the position you have in mind, I shall be glad of an interview at any time convenient to you.

Very truly yours,

The Tone of the Letter. The tone of the letter of application must be well calculated to give the best possible impression to the reader. The professional person's application requires the tone of restraint, culture, and intellectual force that is natural to work of the kind contemplated. That of the inexperienced young business person, on the other hand, may be excusably glowing, and freshly enthusiastic or modest. The salesman who is trying to qualify as "go-getter," will have his own ideas as how to convince the aggressive employer, demanding high-pressure work, of his ability to "produce the goods."

One Man's Idea of a "Live Wire." Here is one man's idea of what a "live wire" letter should be.

Dear Sir:

I am a young man of demonstrated ability. I have brains, a capacity for hard work, and I can write snappy copy that pulls orders. I have always delivered the goods, and my record is clear.

I know your proposition and you can count on me to take off my coat and do the work of my life. I intend to make good, and I think I could do it more quickly with you than with any one else.

I have the reputation of being a live wire in the hardware trade. I can furnish you with gilt edged references, and with proof of a record that assays pretty close to 100%.

In six years I have been boosted from petty job of advertising man from an obscure desk in the corner of the stock room to a recognized position of trust and importance in one of the country's largest and most reliable department stores.

But like so many old, established businesses there is a limit to their adoption of new ways, and for that reason, and that alone, I am looking for a new position. I am still in good standing with my people, and I shall stay with them until I get the position I want.

Yours for the future,

Whether or not such a letter, tinged as it is with conceit, is effective, can only be determined by fact: Did he get an interview?

Representing Yourself at Your Best. One learns from experience—sometimes very costly experience—that the man who gets a job on the basis of a letter of application, must himself be right for that job and his letter must represent him at his best.

Dear Sir:

I am an experienced office worker who is anxious to be affiliated with your firm should you have a vacancy.

My education consists of High School work. I am a graduate of The Taylor Business School in Philadelphia, and also Short's Secretarial School, Stamford, Connecticut. I have taken several subjects with the University Extension of Massachusetts, in Commercial Correspondence; Business Arithmetic; Spanish Conversation and Grammar.

I worked in the Sales Department of the Curtis Publishing Company of Philadelphia for two and one-half years. While there I did general clerical, filing, time-clerk, statistical, typist, dictaphone work, and proof-reading for the typists' department.

With another company I supervised a mailing department in which work was done on the graphotype, addressograph, and multigraph machines. In that place I had charge of the revision and classification of a mailing list of 300,000 names.

I also worked in a fire and automobile insurance company for seven years. While with that firm, I wrote policies, cancellations, re-insurance, checked policies, and quoted rates on automobile insurance. I did a great deal of filing, and handled correspondence successfully.

I am considered a good stenographer, and my former employers have generally turned the correspondence to be answered over to me.

I can easily furnish suitable references.

I am willing to leave the question of salary to your decision.

 ${\bf I}$ shall appreciate an interview and the opportunity to make myself useful to your firm.

Yours very truly,

EGH

P. S.—This letter is a sample of the work I can do on the mimeograph machine.

CHAPTER XXI

MULTIPLYING LETTER POWER

Repeated Occasions for Sending the Same Letter. When we go down town to business in the morning, we know before we get there that to some extent we shall have the same old letters to write as we had last week, last month, and last year. No matter what our place is in the business world, routine letters form a large part of our outgoing mail.

If our firm puts out catalogs and invites interested persons to send for them, we can count on getting some requests nearly every day. And, if we are good salespersons, we usually send out a letter with the catalog.

Dear Mr. So & So:

Your kind inquiry of recent date wherein you express your interest in the Warren package insert book is heartily appreciated. A copy is on the way to you by parcel post. Be on the look-out for it shortly.

Briefly, this book defines the various applications of package inserts as a medium for building more and better business.

Of course, it isn't expected that all advertisers can follow along identically the same lines. Still, the principles are the same. If you will study this book with your own business in mind, you will immediately sense certain ideas that can be adopted, or adapted, for your own worthy purposes. Then, we shall both be the gainers.

Warren's Standard Printing Papers are handled in.....through....

Call upon them for specially prepared dummies, blank or printed samples, or any similar service you may desire.

Cordially yours,

If we are in an office where applicants for work are interviewed, we know that time after time we have to send out requests for information regarding them.

The following letter was sent out by a college appointments bureau:

Regarding: Miss Mary Brown

I am very much interested in promoting the business and professional welfare of the young woman whose name appears at the beginning of this letter.

She gives me your name as a reference.

Will you please let me have your frank, constructive opinion of her character, loyalty, industry and capabilities, or whatever else you see fit to speak of, so that I can supplement our estimate and record with yours.

We try to place our students, day and evening,—men or women, where they may do credit to themselves and to the College of Business Administration; and also where they may perform a really economic service to the community in general, and their employers in particular.

If you wish us to help you in securing an employee at any time, we shall be eager to find you exactly the right person.

Let me assure you that we shall be very grateful for your estimate of this young woman.

Sincerely yours,

If we work in a bank we may have to send out notices of overdrawn accounts and the like day in and day out:

According to our books your account appears to be overdrawn \$—— at the close of business——.

If we are correct, will you please give this matter prompt attention.

Very truly yours,

Forms—Less Trouble; Better Letter. Of course, we cannot always tell in advance that a certain situation is going to repeat itself indefinitely. Indeed, it is generally only after we

have written two or three letters which are almost alike that we see we could save time and bother, and, in the bargain, get better results if we took the trouble to work out a "form" letter which would serve the purpose as well as a personally dictated one would.

By a form letter we mean a frame-work prepared in advance to meet a number of similar situations of which there are three principal varieties of form letters in use: (1) the fully constructed letter; (2) the guide form; and (3) the form paragraph. It is important to get a clear idea of each of these three.

The Full Form Letter. Since the full form letter is designed to carry an impersonal message, it is usually unnecessary and ineffective to make much attempt to personalize it. Therefore, it should be so arranged and prepared that it will require the minimum of labor between the time it is duplicated and the time it is ready to mail.

The Inside Address and Salutation. Such a letter may be addressed: To the Superintendent of Your Plant:, Dear Mr. Dealer:, Dear Sir:, etc., and it may bear a typewritten or facsimile signature. Often it has no inside address, but sometimes the address is filled in, the signature is multigraphed or typed, and details, like amounts of money, dates, and order numbers, are typed in the spaces left for them.

The Fill-In. The letter should be set up, if possible, so that the spaces left for fill-ins come at the ends of lines where there is some flexibility in the amount of space available. Suppose, for instance, that we have a date to fill in. If the space is left at the beginning of the line, or in the middle, we must leave enough room to write the longest wording; say, September 30, 1928, which is seven spaces too many for the shortest—May 1, 1928, for instance.

therein.

Some Examples. The following letters illustrate a practical set-up:

Dear Mr. Carter:				
Some time ago we received an inquiry from				
distributor of Coleman products.				
So far, we have not heard from you or the prospect and we are wondering whether or not you have made this sale.				
Will you please fill in the blank below and return to us?				
Yours very truly,				
Did you make this sale?				
Shall we write customer again?				
Remarks:				
Dear Sir:				
Under another cover, we are shipping to you today, by registered mail insured, the following:				
•••••				
In payment we have charged your savings account \$—— the amount due in accordance with receipted statement herewith.				
When acknowledging receipt of the bonds, will you kindly				

return the enclosed savings withdrawal order properly signed. If your savings passbook is not in our custody it should also be forwarded to us at once so that the proper entry may be made

The following letter is a complete form letter used by the cashier's office to accompany checks which must be returned to the subscriber. The form provides an easy way of explaining the error. The notice is very impersonal; therefore, it does not unpleasantly emphasize the customer's carelessness:

BLANK TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE COMPANY

Cashier's Office 245 State Street, Boston, Mass.

The check in connection with your account for telephone No. —— is returned herewith for the reason indicated (X).

Signature omitted Indorsement omitted X

Not made out to this company Dated in advance (Other reason indicated here).

Another telephone company form letter is used to notify subscribers of a change in their numbers. Since such a change is likely to meet with protest, the writer does well to have the letter begin with an explanation:

On account of a necessary rearrangement of circuits, a change in your telephone number will have to be made.

You will be informed of the new number as soon as the change is completed and anyone who then calls for the old number will be advised of the change and connected with the new number.

If desired, the names of the other patrons on the new line will be furnished.

Yours truly,

How to Use the Forms. The correspondent should be on the lookout for proper occasions to use form letters. Each one takes the place of hundreds or thousands of personally dictated ones; therefore, the correspondent is under an obligation to make each as nearly perfect as possible, which, in a nutshell, means that every letter should give all essential details, should be clear beyond question, and should embody the policy of the concern faultlessly.

Then and there the correspondent should specify carefully the exact conditions under which that particular form letter is to be used, besides giving the letter a number, by which it will be known thereafter. Such a number can be placed inconspicuously under stenographic data. On my desk, I see letters numbered S-12, S-24, S-35 from one concern; others bear the symbol P-14, P-24, and a collection series is "keyed" AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, and AH. Thus each can be readily identified by both the dictator and the transcriber.

Special Inquiries. The person who is interested enough to inquire about the product is generally worth taking the trouble to answer carefully. Such a person may ask questions that our form letter is prepared to answer thoroughly—but it is quite likely that he may make inquiries that demand special attention. One efficient way to cover this situation is to use the form letter as a guide.

The Guide Form. A guide form is a suggestive treatment of a letter which is repeated frequently with slight variations. The correspondent may follow the guide form as he dictates what appears to be a personal message. He may vary the detail to suit the circumstances and thus succeed in producing a letter which is personal, that is, individual, yet adheres to the firm's regular policy. Although the finished letter differs more or less from the guide, yet it may retain its fundamental effectiveness.

The next guide form letter is furnished dealers in Paige and Jewett cars. It can be used for either; the chief change required is in the name of the car. However, the form also specifies below the letter "Revise fourth paragraph if used for Paige Prospects":

Dear Sir:

In driving, it's just as important to be able to bring your car to a quick cushioned stop on short notice as it is to get away fast.

That's one of the joys of driving a New Jewett (Paige)—you can do both of these things better than with most other cars.

You don't know what real safety and peace of mind is if you haven't tried the Jewett (Paige) hydraulic four-wheel brakes. A light touch of your toe on the brake pedal, and the car quickly comes to rest—without screeching or skidding or violent lurching of your body.

There is only one "six" within hundreds of dollars of the Jewett that offers hydraulic brakes. They cost more—but they're worth it.

And Oh, Man! How that New Jewett (Paige) answers the accelerator! When an unexpected hole in traffic suddenly opens you are able to slip through instantly. If you're caught behind a stalled car, you can back and get away in a jiffy. You can make time with the Jewett (Paige) because it obeys your every impulse without hesitation.

We wish you would see for yourself how different it is in behavior from the ordinary car. Just say the word—call us by phone or return this letter—and we'll give you that opportunity.

Sometimes the conditions show that although many letters have to be answered individually, yet as a whole they deal with a limited range of items—prices, sizes, quality, designs, structure, operation, and the like. Mrs. A. may want to know about prices and sizes; Mrs. B. about prices and methods of shipment and shipping charges; Mrs. C. about sizes and patterns and so on. All of them may be sensible questions which the correspondent is anxious to deal with effectively, particularly since each inquiry is a possible sales lead.

Form Paragraphs. The usual way of composing good answers to such complex and varied inquiries involves the use of "form paragraphs." The correspondent may gather material for form paragraphs by examining letters already in the files and by having extra carbons made of current outgoing letters from the department under consideration. In this manner, paragraphs may be found in their natural setting, where they are more likely to be in tune with the situation, and less likely to be artificial, than if written independently of the letter.

There are a few points in making up these paragraphs that we should bear in mind. Efficiency demands that the answer to each item be written up independently of any of the others; so that it can be combined with others to suit the inquirer's demands. Each paragraph, however, should have an opening and closing which enables it to be easily joined to other paragraphs. In fact, each may even have alternate openings and closings which make it even more adaptable to what precedes and follows it.

Some Examples. The best of these paragraphs may be selected and intelligently revised, and then further experimented with, until eventually the best possible paragraph is finally chosen to be entered in the "form paragraph book." It is then given a number. The paragraphs from each department would probably bear, in addition to the number, a distinctive departmental symbol, as S for sales.

Thus the following paragraphs appearing as form paragraphs in the Gruen Watch Company's correspondence might possibly be designated:

Several years ago it probably was good judgment in selecting a wrist watch, to choose one of the larger, less attractive ones, for the sake of timekeeping dependability.

Since then, however, the Gruen Guild craftsmen have so standardized and refined the design of their small, rectangular S 2810 wristlets and Cuadron strap watches as to insure thoroughly reliable timekeeping service.

Some Letters Using These Form Paragraphs. These two paragraphs are used as designated in the following letters:

Dear Miss Thomas:

Several years ago it was really good judgment in selecting a wrist watch for school use, to choose one of the larger, less S 2809b attractive round ones for the sake of accuracy.

Since then, however, the makers of the Gruen Guild Watch have so standardized and refined the design of their S 2810 small, rectangular wristlet watches as to insure thoroughly reliable timekeeping service.

We felt that you might be glad to know that now you can have smartness and attractiveness as well as dependability in a small wrist watch. The several models illustrated suggest themselves as particularly suitable for both school and social use. Each one is fitted with the Gruen "Precision" grade of movement which we have now had considerable experience with and which we stand back of in every way.

The photos do not really do the watches justice. We'd really be pleased to have you stop in and see the actual watches. There are many other styles too, from \$35. to \$——, all genuine Gruen Watches.

Cordially yours,

Dear Madam:

In 903 jewelry stores in different cities during the last graduation season, 21,431 watches were sold as gifts to students. Of these 75% or 16,485 were Gruen Watches.

Nothing could show more decidedly the preference of the young folks today when it comes to fine watches. They want smartness; they demand performance and they appreciate the social prestige of the name "Gruen" on the dial of their watches.

Several years ago it probably was good judgment, in selecting a wrist watch, to choose one of the larger, less attractive S ones, for the sake of timekeeping dependability.

2809a

Since then, however, the Gruen Guild craftsmen have so standardized and refined the design of their small, rectangular wristlets and Cuadron strap watches as to insure thoroughly S 2810 reliable timekeeping service.

We felt you would be interested in knowing how completely the keen demand for attractiveness with dependability has turned to Gruen.

Hundreds of our customers wear these watches so we are in a position to know how satisfactorily they perform and how well they please. Solidly back of the Gruen guarantee, you will find our own. For style and dependability, Now—your watch should be a Gruen-and we shall take a keen delight in showing you the many delightful designs in pocket, strap and wristlet watches by Gruen from \$25 to \$250.

Yours truly,

Of course—the best in diamonds—the most fashionable in silverware as well.

The Form Paragraph Book. The transcriber as well as the dictator has access to a copy of the form paragraph book. The dictator in using the book merely refers to the paragraphs by number and when he wishes to include material not covered by a form paragraph, he may insert a personally dictated paragraph to cover it.

The Question of "Personalizing" Forms. Theoretically the duplicated form letter should not try to be personal, because it is not supposed to carry an individual message. Many form letters abide by this standard. But, in spite of the fact that the public has been deluged with so-called "personal" letters that were form letters in a thin disguise, other firms believe that it does pay to make every letter message look as if it were personal.

Quite aside from any question of ethics—whether or not the "personalized form" is an attempt to deceive—there still remains the practical question as to whether or not it pays to try to match the filled-in address to the body of the letter. This last is a question of fact for each firm to decide for itself. One way to find out is to divide the mailing list in halves, sending one half of the letters personalized, and the other half not. Since replies may be directed to separate departments, or otherwise keyed, the pulling power of the two forms may be compared scientifically.

It is by no means *impossible* to match the "fill-in" to the body of the letter, for the addressograph and multigraph machines are properly equipped to do it. The matching process, however, requires a degree of care that not all letter departments are able or willing to give. The firm which fills in letters without any particular attempt to match the shade may be called careless. On the other hand, the particular situation may call for definite information and but little letter attractiveness.

Use and Abuse of Forms. The very things that have made the form letter so useful have led to its abuse. Because of its cheapness particularly, some firms have been short-sighted enough to allow their correspondents to duplicate a letter whenever the least possible excuse arose. They have allowed reduction of cost to overshadow all of the other factors producing efficiency. Consequently, although many of the objections, such as those arising from poor typography and poor adaptation to needs, may be overcome, many executives disapprove them and try to avoid their use.

The form letter should be used wisely. It is a mistake to substitute the long typewritten or duplicated piece of copy for the printed folder which can be strengthened by pictures in black and white or colors. The additional effectiveness of the colored illustrated enclosure ought to be considered as well as the possibility of the lower cost of typewriting or duplicating.

The Chief Value of the Form Letter. But when the pros and cons are weighed, one fact stands out: the use of the form letter as a means of elevating the tone and standardizing the policy of the routine letter cannot be overestimated. It offers about the only way out of the very complex correspondence situation of today. It allows the immense task of attending to routine correspondence to be distributed to numerous clerks, yet it makes it possible for the correspondent himself to compose the routine letters and thus insure their representing the firm as favorably as its sales correspondence does.

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